

Technologies of Expression, Originality and the Techniques of the Observer

A dissertation presented in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.)
Art and Design

at the Art and Design Faculty of the Bauhaus University Weimar

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Born on 16.12.1980
Matriculation N° 90498

2014

Defended on 22.04.2015

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Part 1 (Theoretical Work)

1 ● Introduction

The major goal of the study and its associate work is to establish a clearer understanding of the relationship between art and technology in our time. With reference to the essay of Walter Benjamin 1936 *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*¹, in which he examined how far newly introduced devices challenged the originality and the authenticity of artwork, as well as the public ability to accept and absorb the mass-production of artworks. In addition, a series of essays had been published throughout the 60s and the 70s dealing with the issue of photographic reproduction.

One of the interests in this research topic is due to the fact that I am among those who have received a formalist training in art schools. I began, in good faith, to continue the directions I was trained in, but then felt betrayed: I had been trained in an archaic system that had already been denounced by leading contemporary artists. One of the characters of this formalist education was the stigma attached to painting from photographs for example, the fact that the painter is working from a filtered or a second-hand imagery (the lens – the film – and the lab effects) was considered a faux pas. Even though, those tools may allow for easier transition of the image onto canvas.

Accordingly, a real contradiction between the human eye and optical devices existed in the last two centuries and painters were encountering a conflict between what they had been taught throughout

¹ Benjamin, Walter, and J. A. Underwood. *The work of art in the age of mechanical reproduction*. London: Penguin, 2008.

their career and what new methods and techniques had been brought to the world.

It is important to note however, that a few centuries ago, painting through a lens was no more than a fantasy, it has been well established that painter's eyes were, still and should always be the one and only medium between the subject and the painting surface. However, there are optical devices available that have never been used before in the production of paintings. In the recent years, we have seen some exhibitions showing source photography alongside finished paintings. Here we have witnessed a full and shocking similarity in color, value, composition and scale. All elements have been faithfully rendered to perfection. Shockingly, the paintings were a copy of the photographs and were still made by the hands of the same artist. The issue of the copy and the imitation is discussed in chapter 6.

In order to escape from the acute similarity between painting and photo, the painter had to physically apply pigments onto canvas using his own hands, something that the camera, with all its sophistication, cannot achieve. We have also witnessed quite a number of painters who claim sharply and in straight words that they do not use optical aids, as if using optical aids is a sin. Their statement carries with it an implication of the superiority of traditional art practice.

A major part of the study is the investigation of how we visually perceive (with the eye and brain) increasingly generated images and photos that describe how we react to our visual perceptions and how these perceptions produce concepts of truth and human values.

People are accustomed to accepting the illusion of depth (3D) on a flat surface or picture plane (2D). This illusion of depth in second dimensional art, builds the foundation of our visual perception, which is inexorably linked to the illusion of reality.

Paintings and drawings are sometimes reconstructions of memory (about remembering) or constructions from the imagination (about how the artist thinks he sees). The images are metaphors for the process of visual perception, the understanding of the world that

results from these perceptions, and how new technologies and information influence the evolution of this worldview.

Sight primarily determines how we perceive our environment. Even though seeing and understanding are two different processes, the implication of language inherent in seeing something is that we thereby understand what we have seen (e.g., "I see what you mean"). We often extend the process of mental visualization to perceptual understanding (e.g., "To see in the mind's eye"). Albert Einstein's use of visual construction to explain relativity illustrates how our collective sense of reality has been modified through sight-related linguistic constructs. For example, Einstein induced us to seeing in our "mind's eye" by conjuring images of trains, rulers, and clocks that alter with changes in relative velocity to illustrate concepts of continuum in his papers on relativity.

Moreover, it is important to mention the subjectivity of perception we know from daily experience. People see things differently, that each person has a slightly different view on reality. The communication of those subjective realities is what defines the world.

However, through communication man is able to create concepts by which he lives with others. Each society constantly recreates itself through communication by continually redefining the collective reality. Art is also a part of this process of defining reality because it is completely founded on communication. The artist uses mental tools other than that of the scientist – turning around the scientific process, moving from concept to analyses rather than the reverse to define his/her world.

In reality, each work of art is simply a manifestation of that world, permitting us to experience the image as conceived by the creator. Artists therefore submit their worlds to contribute to the definition of the world in a greater extent, but in the same fashion, as we all do. Each work is a model of reality, which we use as a standard against which specific judgments, and perceptions are made, accepted or rejected.

In a similar manner, paintings and drawings illustrate some worldview through the painter's depiction. The use of 'altered images' (as previously suggested in the Einstein example) is integral to paintings, particularly narrative paintings. Altered images inevitably occur through the artist's worldview and visual perception. Speaking at the same breath of "aesthetic perception," that is, of the perception of objects that are aesthetically significant, may be to speak of a special kind of perception, perhaps then even of a special faculty of perception.

And with the multiplying of faculties goes the multiplying of entities. One hears remarks for instance about the perception of "beauty" and the discovery of specifically "aesthetic objects." Much the same kind of talk may be noted in certain companion fields; one hears, for instance, of "moral intuition" and of the perception of "goodness." The dangers at least are apparent, though the correctives are usually less so.

Now, the complications that follow from speaking of the perception of a work of art, from speaking more or less generically of aesthetic perception, regardless of the kind of art object involved, have less to do with the achievement of such perceiving than with the properties of the objects so perceived. Nor can the generic notion of aesthetic perception be clarified by comparing it with hearing, with seeing with one's eyes, or even with imagining; this much we can guess simply by noting that all sorts of such abilities are called into play in aesthetic perception: hearing is crucial to the perception of music, seeing is crucial to the perception of paintings, and understanding language is crucial to the perception of literature.

Still we speak of the perception of a work of art as if that had nothing to do with the special matters of hearing, seeing, imagining and understanding. In fact, it does not have anything to do with those special matters directly. Stated in another way, we begin by allowing that, whatever they are, the properties of works of art and of other aesthetically eligible objects are perceivable; we do not start with a special model of perception, say, one restricted to sensory reports, and then ask whether the alleged properties of works of art are perceivable. We could, of course; and on the provision of obvious models, the

properties of works of art would be promptly labeled "illusory" or "imperceptible". Thus, the study also tends to discuss the different models of seeing of modernity.

In all eras and visual styles, artists control the amount of detail in the images they create, wanting the appearance of reality, which has been organized and structured to make its meaning clearer, if necessarily more limited than the infinite complexity of reality.² . This is a technique to make the image easier to perceive or view. He or she makes a definite statement about what is important in the image, acting like a filter between observed reality and the work, which results in the art object.

Artists must first be viewers³ and viewers ultimately consume the resulting images. Vision is simple and effortless. Since in most cases, it requires no conscious effort or exertion, it seems like a trivial operation, something that just happens when the light falls on the eye and makes one see. Nevertheless, seeing is the product of a very complicated and developed visual system. In seeing, we are all experts, and experts make things seem simple. Without any effort, we can move and act in the world and recognize objects, even under difficult conditions.

The abilities of our sight outreach even our awareness of them and the simplicity of seeing masks our limitations. The apparent ease with which we see slips, if our vision is emphasized and stressed, for example when one is struggling to focus on a written page while falling asleep, or searching for one familiar face in a crowd. At these moments, we become aware of sight as a struggle to organize and make sense of the world. This struggle has constant victories, but also failures.

Sometimes our failures are designed. However, they are more often accidental. Some information was present and we did not notice it. On

² Santella, Anthony. *The Art of Seeing: Visual Perception in Design and Evaluation of Non-Photorealistic Rendering*. Thesis (Ph. D.)--Rutgers University, 2005, 2005.

³ Ruskin, John. *Inaugural Address Delivered at the Cambridge School of Art, October 29th, 1858*. Chicago: Belford, Clarke & Co, 1880.

the other hand, by careful arrangement and manipulation the artist can ensure that his display of visual information does not miss anything important. A variety of techniques are used to make a clearer interpretation of reality. Detail is put only where it is important, forms can be edited or removed, colors and textures can be changed. Paintings, drawings, technical illustrations, and even the seemingly photorealistic art, all products of the human hand can be simplified and manipulated in order to facilitate their interpretation.

Reality is complex and chaotic sometimes, but the goal of Realism is a clearer understanding of reality. An understanding that is structured and organized in a more limited way than the infinite complexity of reality.

The achievement of this kind of clarity has always been the job of artists who make individual decisions about what is important, and how to manage it.

2 ● The observer:

2.1. Preface

It is necessary to distinguish between the spectator and the observer as specified by Jonathan Crary. He preferred the term "observer" to the term "spectator" and he avoided the connotations of passivity couched within notions of a spectator. Observer means "to conform one's action, to comply with", for as Crary notes: "Though obviously one who sees, an observer is more importantly one who sees within a prescribed set of possibilities, one who is embedded in a system of conventions and limitations".⁴ Observers are only effects of an "irreducibly heterogeneous system of discursive, social, technological, and institutional relations" while "spectare, the Latin root for 'spectator'" literally means "to look at".⁵

The observing subject is "both a product of and at the same time constitutive of modernity in the nineteenth century [...] he or she is made adequate to a constellation of new events, forces, and institutions that together are loosely and perhaps tautologically definable as 'modernity'".⁶

Focusing on understanding the observer in the present moment in relation to a particular historical timeframe in the nineteenth century and guided by the notion that visual culture has a history that should be organized and discussed as a historical issue. The goal is to provide

⁴ Crary, Jonathan. *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1998. p.6

⁵ Ibid

⁶ Ibid

specific narrative identification for the various kinds of questions and problems of visual culture.

It is also essential to outline particular arguments about the experience of “modernity” as it emerged in the nineteenth century. And to shine a spotlight on some theorists and authors that dealt with and argued about the changes in seeing and observing.

2.2. The Nineteenth Century

The sense of touch had been an integral part of classical theories of vision in the 17th and 18th centuries, and a separation of touch from sight happened within a process of separation of senses and industrial remapping of the body in the nineteenth century that grasps the eye from the network of personalization versus perceived space.⁷

In addition, while the relationship of vision to touch becomes gradually weaker in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, their relationship's patterns of distance and proximity remain operative throughout modernity. The tactile is considered the silent partner of vision, helping to legitimate its hegemony even as it is ideologically renounced. However, at the same time, the tactile has bestowed the model for a radical response to the culture of ocularcentrism. The immediacy and implicit agency of the tactile seems to threaten the detachment and passivity upon which Ocularcentric society depends.

We are amidst a period of disarranging of the senses, which presents a chance to create a politics of scale, which thusly recognizes the body as the delicate locus of our connection to the world and to others. The risk is that our investigation of the proximate will create a new paradigm of power, which extrapolates from embodied experience to produce a transcendentalism of proximity that would supplant ocularcentrism with its tactile counterpart without bringing in question the path in

⁷ Crary, Jonathan. *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1998.

which they both idealize and disengage the sensory apparatus from the human body for ideological purposes.

According to Crary, one major cultural site was the stereoscope which made the breach between tangibility and visibility. Foucault has detailed the actual shape and density of the field in which the transformation of perception was evident.

Crary is influenced by Foucault's notion of an emergent bio-politics in the early nineteenth century whereby 'the transcendent is mapped onto the empirical', a process which entailed "an exhaustive inventory of the body" so that: "By the 1840s there had been both (1) the gradual transferral of the holistic study of subjective experience or mental life to an empirical and quantitative plane, and (2) the division and fragmentation of the physical subject into increasingly specific organic and mechanical systems".

The observer of the nineteenth century was consuming and practicing a wide range of optical and sensory experiences when painting was slighted by the founders of modern art history.

Three nineteenth century developments in art history practice are:

- 1- The historical and evolutionary modes of thought
- 2- The transformation of socio-political relations involved with the creation of leisure and time and the cultural enfranchisement of more sectors of urban population.
- 3- New multiple modes of image reproduction.

What should be stressed upon is the fact that the work of art historians of the nineteenth century was not particularly connected to the art of previous centuries. Thus, the work of subsequent generations of art historians in the nineteenth century gradually became assimilated into the main stream of the discipline through dispassionate and objective examination.

Nietzsche has undermined any possibility of the existence of a contemplative beholder and imposed an anti-aesthetic approach using some scientific words like "influx" "adaptation" "react" and

“irritability”; these words have already been reconfigured in new perceptual components. He described the position of the individual within the milieu in terms of a crisis of assimilation:

Sensibility immensely more irritable;...the abundance of disparate impressions greater than ever; cosmopolitanism in foods, literatures, newspapers, forms, tastes, even landscapes. The tempo of this influx prestissimo; the impressions erase each other; one instinctively resists taking in anything, taking anything deeply, to "digest" anything; a weakening of the power to digest results from this. A kind of adaptation to the flood of impressions takes place; men unlearn spontaneous action, they merely react to stimuli from the outside.⁸

Parallel to the collapse of classical models of vision, observation was increasingly a question of equivalent sensations and stimuli, which was no longer referred to as a spatial location.

Beginning in the 1820's and 1830's a repositioning of the observer away from the fixed relations of interior – exterior took place, which was presupposed by the “camera obscura” through which the internal sensation and the external signs distinctively blurred. Goethe, following a long established practice in his *Theory of Colors*, published in 1810, made the camera obscura the site of his optical studies. The dark room, of course, had been a crucial feature of the experiments detailed by Newton in his *Opticks* (1704), where it established categorical relations between interior and exterior, between light source, aperture, and screen, and between observer and representation. For nearly two hundred years, the camera became a model, obviously elaborated in a variety of ways, of how observation leads to truthful inferences about an external world.

It was an era when the camera obscura was simultaneously and inseparably a central epistemological figure within a discursive order.

The optical camera obscura became the model of the eye during the 17th century, where a spherical dark room with a small hole and a receiving

⁸ Nietzsche, Friedrich. *The Will to Power*, trans. Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale, New York: Random House, 1967. p.47

wall replaced the eye and its retina. Despite the scientific discoveries of the 17th century, a basic anatomical knowledge of this organ did not differ significantly from that of a 15th century artist/anatomist like Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519). What had changed, however, was the realization that the perception of light rays does not occur in the vitreous humor but on the retina. And it was the so-called camera obscura, the optical instrument described by Johannes Kepler in his *Ad Vitellionem Paralipomena* of 1604 that led to this important new view of the eye:

Thus vision is brought about by a picture of the thing seen being formed on the concave surface of the retina... the greater the acuity of vision of a given person, the finer the picture formed in his/her eye will be.⁹

⁹ Kepler, Johannes, and de Marne, Claude. *Ad Vitellionem paralipomena, quibus astronomiae pars optica traditur: potissimum de artificiosa obseruatione et aestimatione diametrorum deliquiorum[ue] solis & lunae. Cum exemplis insignium eclipsium. Habes hoc libro, lector, inter alia multa noua, Tractatum luculentum de modo visionis, & humorum oculi vsu, contra opticos & anatomicos*. Francofurti: Apud Claudium Marnium & haeredes Ioannis Aubrii, 1604. p.170

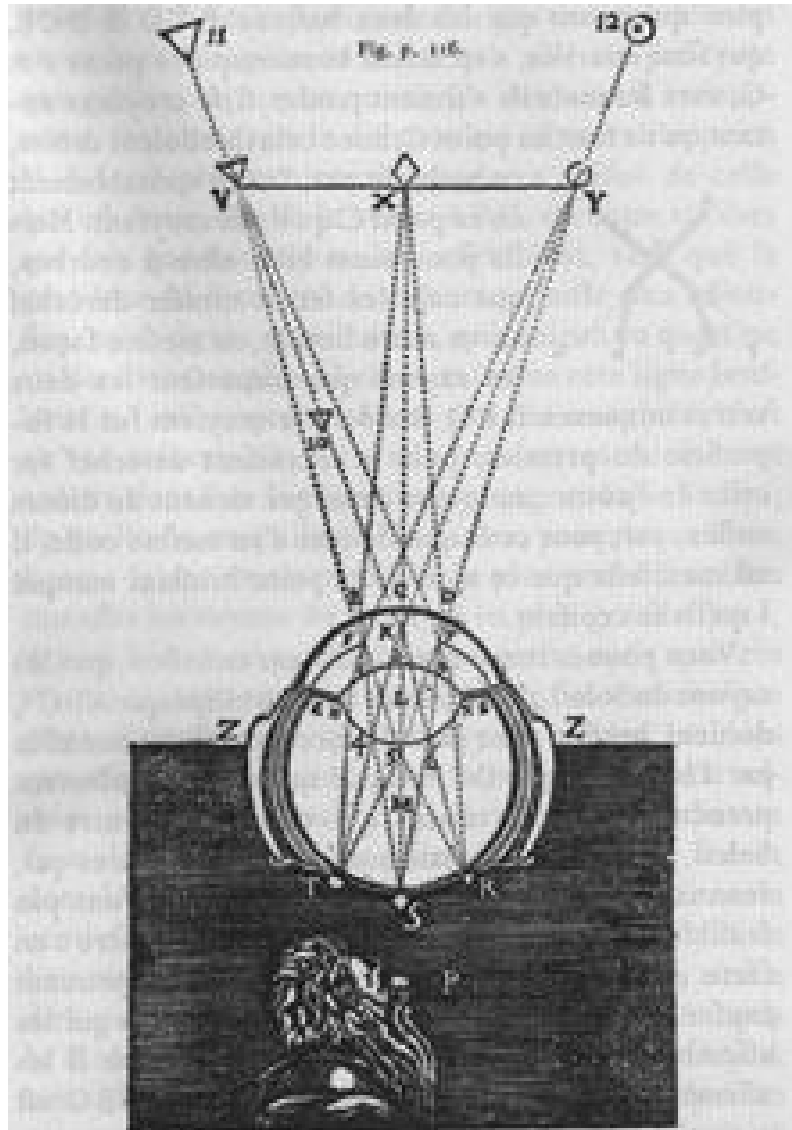


Figure 1 Man observing the retina image by means of an anatomically prepared ox eye. This experiment was actually executed by at least three 17th-century savants: Christoph Scheiner (1575-1650), René Descartes and Gaspar Schott (1608-1666). Encyclopédie Larousse en ligne.

The camera obscura served as a model of the eye that facilitated a new understanding of vision and provided a rather easier utility to handle what the eye itself can do, underlining and making a distinction between a “virtual” image, such as that produced in a mirror and a “real” one reflected on the screen. The lens could handle and control the projected image by simply moving it onward and backward, and the combined set of mirrors and lenses helped to provide the possibility of better understanding refraction in an experimental way. Adding new insights into optics and serving as an analysis of what both the camera obscura and what the human eye could provide.

The florescence of the optical camera obscura was between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries. Its significance for the understanding of the eye and the science of optics may even be limited to the first half of 1600. Its employment for painting is claimed to have started with Johannes Vermeer in the seventeenth and continued throughout the 18th century, as I will discuss in further detail in the following chapters. It was argued that Bernardo Bellotto, known as Canaletto (1722-1780), may have produced paintings with the aid of a camera obscura. By the end of this century, however, the decline of the optical camera obscura had already begun.

Following the emergence and development of photography in the nineteenth century, the importance of the camera obscura was downgraded to merely a predecessor of the modern camera and it was demoted to being only an item in historical museums. The periodical revivals and renaissances that the camera obscura has enjoyed/ is enjoying among professional as well as amateur photographers concern the simple pinhole camera, not the optical camera obscura. Thus, the optical camera obscura has truly become a museum item, but with the exception of a few loyal artists and photographers. It is of interest first of all to historians – historians of physiology, of astronomy, and of optics on the one hand and historians of visual culture in general and of art in particular on the other.

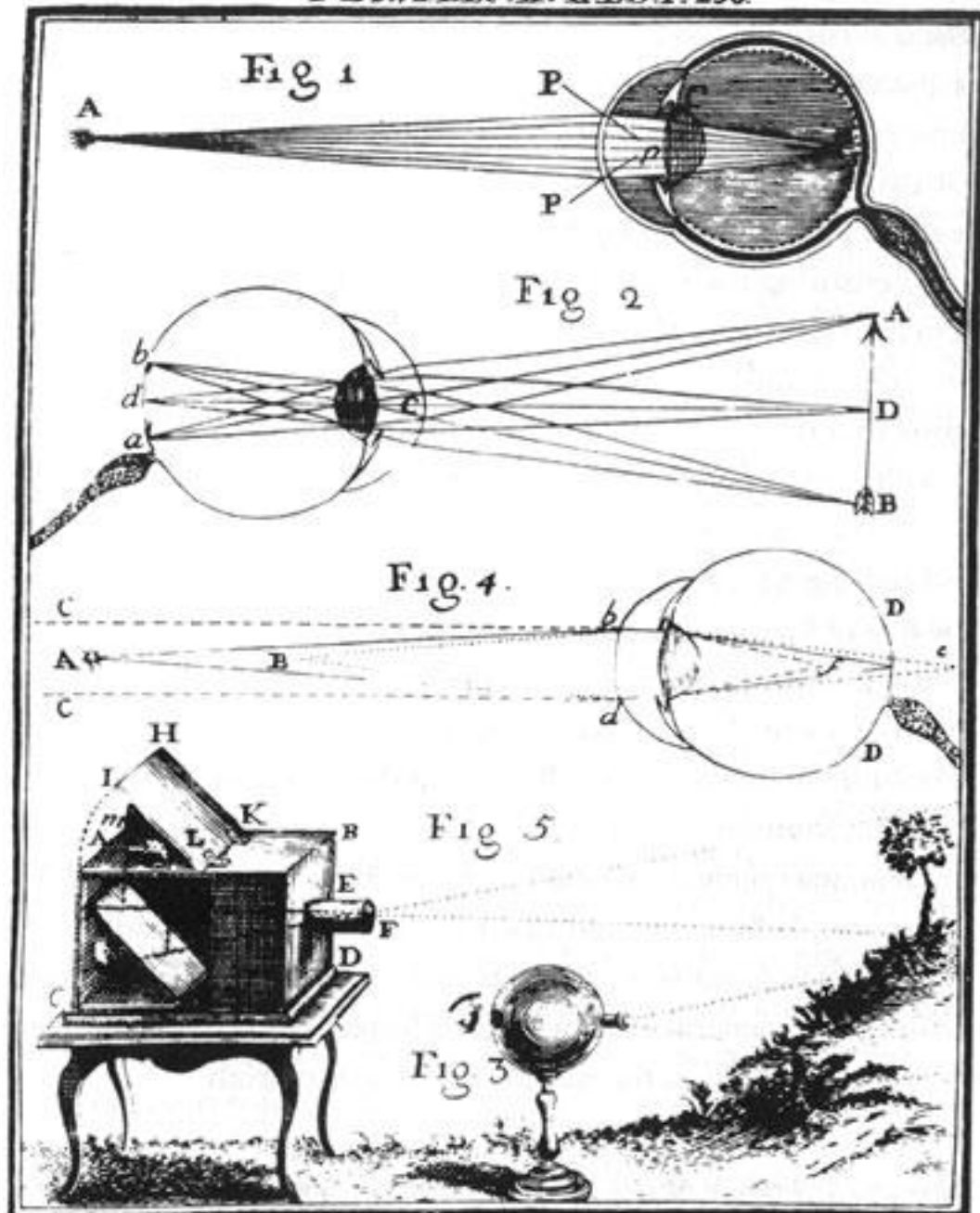


Figure 2 Comparison between eye and camera obscura. Early eighteenth century. (Rene Descartes' 1637 diagram (right) of the eye as a camera obscura. Descartes compared the eye to the camera saying that the retina is the same as the screen of the camera where the image resides). From: *The Techniques of the observer*.

2.3. Variations of the Observer's Perception

In his 1956 publication *The Nude: A study in Ideal Form*, Kenneth Clark made the distinction between "naked" and "nude". He openly acknowledged the frisson of eroticism and empathy that a glance at unclothed human beings typically engenders. But at the same time, he was trying to minimize and neutralize this reaction to emphasize aesthetic response.

He avers that "No nude, however abstract, should fail to arouse in the spectator some vestige of erotic feeling ... if it does not do so; it is bad art and false morals. Following the argument of John Berger, the desire to grasp and be united with another human is so fundamental, a part of our nature that our judgment of what is known as 'pure form' is inevitably influenced by it, and one of the difficulties of the nude as a subject for art is that these instincts cannot be hidden."¹⁰ Contrary to what Clark argued, John Berger reversed the values of the terms "Naked" and "nude".

2.4. The Antinomies of Observation

The social presence of women is of a different nature than that of a man. In some traditions, it was said that: men act and women appear. Men look at women while women see themselves being watched. This determines the relation of women to themselves besides the traditional relations between men and women. The observing manner of a woman in herself is male. She turns herself into an object – and most particularly an object of vision: a sight. John Berger explained that women were the principal theme in European oil painting in the nude category. As such, it is possible to discover some of the criteria and conventions of observing and judging women.

¹⁰ Clark, Kenneth. *The Nude: A Study in Ideal Form*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1956.

Medieval artists tended to illustrate sequences of the scenes of Adam and Eve when they suddenly became aware of being naked as a result of eating the apple as told in the biblical tradition (Figure 3). In this context one can say that nakedness was created in the mind of the viewer. However, throughout the renaissance era, these sequences disappeared, and the depicted moments became moments of shame. The couple wear fig leaves or make modest gestures with their hands. Their shame is not strongly related to one another but rather to the observer. Later on, paintings gradually became more secular, however other themes still offered a chance to paint nudes, but the implication that the subject (a woman) is aware of being seen by a spectator remains clear in them. She is not naked as she is; she is naked because the spectator sees her as such.



Figure 3 Fall and Expulsion from Paradise by Pol de Limbourg, early 15th century. Retrieved from wikiart.org

In Tintoretto's *Susannah and the Elders* as noticed by Berger, the actual theme of the picture was of the Elders spying on Susannah taking her bath. She looks noticeably back at us while we are looking at her.

In another version of Tintoretto, Susannah is looking at herself in a mirror joining the spectators in seeing herself.



Figure 4 Susanna and the Elders by Tintoretto, Retrieved from wikiart.org

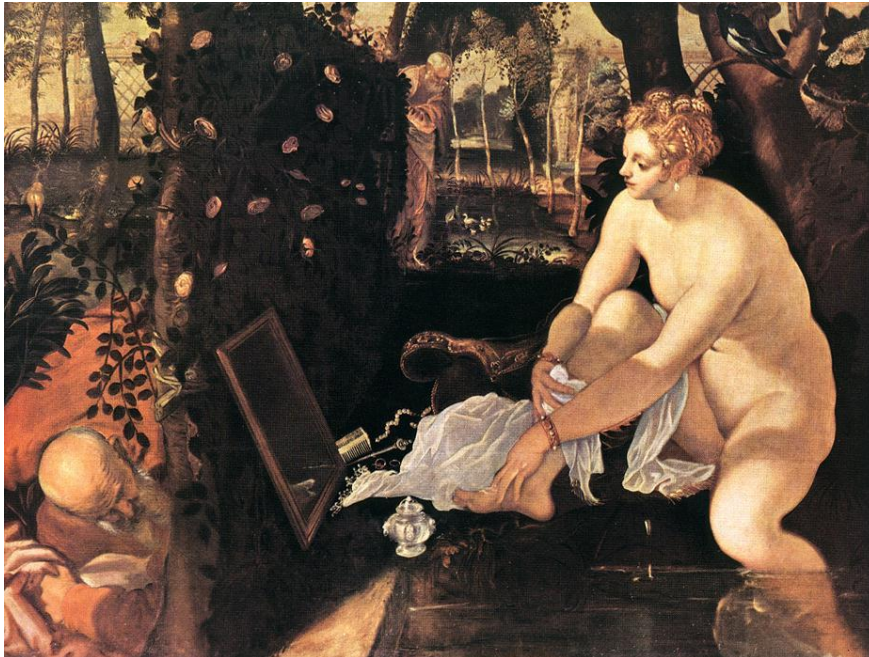


Figure 5 Susanna and the Elders by Tintoretto, Retrieved from wikiart.org

Back then, the mirror was usually used as a symbol of women's vanity before becoming demoralized, and viewed as hypocritical. Also, calling the painting "vanity" was plainly condemning the depicted woman whose nakedness was merely for one's own pleasure. The principal function of the mirror in this painting was to make the woman model scheme and participate in making her merely "a sight".

The painting commissioned by Charles the second from Lely was a highly typical image of the tradition, nominally Venus and Cupid. In fact, it is a portrait of one of the king's mistresses, Nell Gwynne, showing her passively looking at the spectator who is supposedly staring at her naked body. However, this nakedness is not an expression of her own feelings of being a sign of submission to the owner's feeling or demands. The painting was meant, in reality, to be shown to others to attain their envy towards the king.

In other Non-European traditions such as Indian, Persian, African or Pre-Columbian art, Nakedness is never supine in this way. In these traditions, the theme of a work is sexual attraction; it is likely to show active sexual love as between two people, the actions of each absorbing the other in an active manner.

We can now start to see the difference between nakedness and nudity in the European tradition. Defining nakedness was simply to be without clothes whereas the nude is a form of art. Accordingly, the nude is not the starting point of painting but only a way of seeing what painting can achieve. To a certain degree, this is true, although the way of seeing a nude is not necessarily confined to art. There are also other applications related to it like photographs, nude poses and nude gestures. What is true, is that the nude is always conventionalized – and the authority for its conventions derives from a certain tradition of art.

What do these conventions mean? What does a nude signify? It is not sufficient to answer these questions merely in terms of the art form, for it is evident that the nude also relates to lived sexuality.

In the average European oil painting of the nude, the principal/main character is never painted. He is the observer in front of the picture and he is presumed to be a male. Everything in the painting is targeting him. He is supposed to be watching the painting all the time. Everything must appear to be the result of his being there. The whole thing was addressed to him but by definition, he is still a stranger with his clothes on while at the same time, the figures in the painting have assumed their nudity.

3 ● Science, Art, Technology and Linear Perspective

In this chapter, there is a reference to the relationship between science and art, the impact of technology on art and the discovery of linear perspective.

On one hand, science is commonly viewed as the process of uncovering the deep structures of nature through rational means. Rational methods involve linguistic precision, impartiality and repeatability.

As Aldous Huxley explained, rationality requires the controlled use of language and impartiality toward the results of objective procedures based on repeated and controlled interventions with natural processes.¹¹

On the other hand, art involves subjectivity-reliance on the tastes and wishes of the artist, and does not require linguistic precision. Inspired visions are attained through the passionate use of artistic media.

“The results of art are not disconnected from the personalities of the artists. The processes used in the arts require the total engagement of the artist.”¹²

Several correspondences can be seen between art and science. The discovery of linear perspective for instance and the development of optics, allowed the three-dimensional interpretation of the images on surfaces and the reading of images through lenses (The drawings and engravings of Brunelleschi and Dürer represent great examples).

¹¹ Huxley, A. *Literature and Science*, London: Chatto & Windus, 1963, p. 11

¹² *Ibid*, p.33

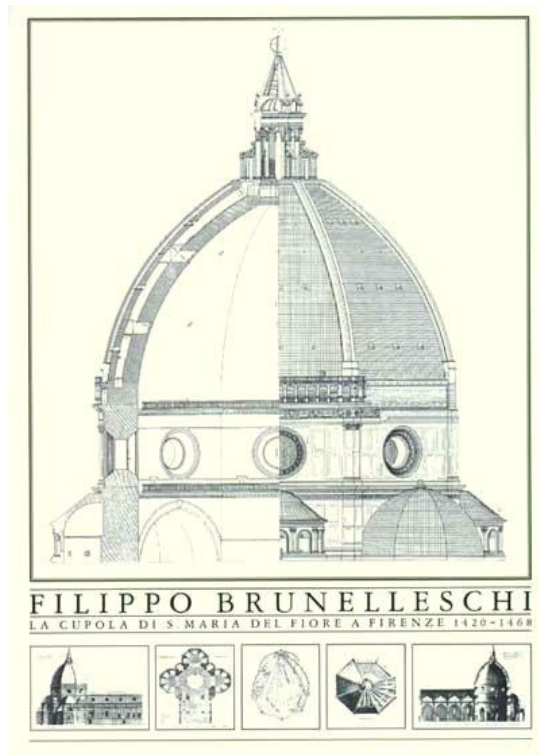


Figure 6 Filippo Brunelleschi – La cupola di S. Maria del Fiore – Florence 1420-1468

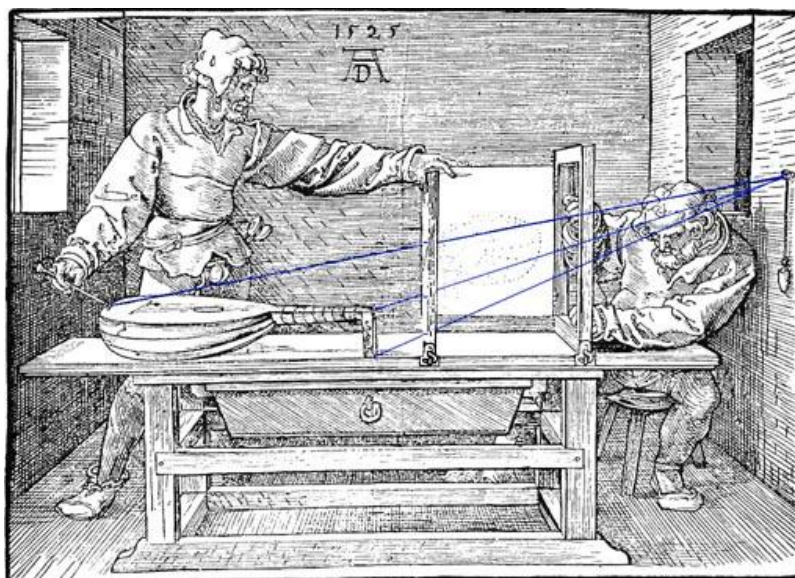


Figure 7 Abrecht Duerer - Man Drawing a Lute (Perspective drawing in the Renaissance: "Man drawing a lute" by Albrecht Dürer, 1525), Retrieved from wikiart.org

3.1. The Linear Perspective

The basic assumption of linear perspective is that light travels in straight lines. Once we have made this identification, our optical problem is reduced to the mathematical operation of projection. However, this projection is accomplished simply by connecting each of the points of the object to another single point, the center of projection or station point, with straight lines, and then finding the intersections of those lines with a plane. (Figure 8)

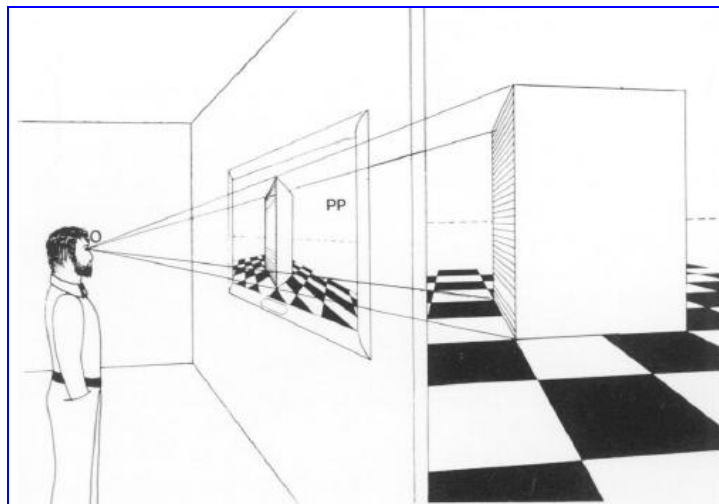


Figure 8 Perspective projection is accomplished by connecting each of the points of the object to the center of projection and preferred viewpoint, O , with straight lines and then finding the intersections of those lines with a plane, e.g. picture plane.

If one were to mark all of these intersections on the plane, a perspective picture of the object would then be formed, and so this plane is called the picture plane. If one then viewed this picture monocularly, from the center of projection, it would be found that each of the drawn marks was exactly coincident with its corresponding point on the actual object. This is simply because the light from the object to the eye follows then the same lines used in the projection.

This coincidence of the drawing and the object is not possible (for all but the most trivial objects) if they are viewed from any other point in space. Thus, we may say that the center of projection is the preferred viewpoint of the perspective picture. In practice, the picture plane is

often opaque, and we rarely have the actual subject of a picture at hand for direct comparison. Therefore, a unique viewpoint can usually only be inferred with the help of outside knowledge about the shape and orientation of the subject and/or the processes by which the picture was made.

It should be noted that using any plane parallel to the original picture plane would result in a drawing that is geometrically 'similar' to the original drawing. In other words, all of the shapes will be the same; the pictures will only differ in scale.

In addition, mathematically there is no requirement that the picture plane lie between the object and the center of projection. Picture planes behind the object will simply produce larger pictures. However, picture planes behind the projection center will result in an image, which is inverted, as in a camera.

3.2. Linear perspective in use

The use of linear perspective in art can be traced back to Brunelleschi's now lost panels depicting the Baptistery of Florence and the *Palazzo Vecchio* (1425). (Figure 9)

Brunelleschi observed the buildings in a mirror and attempted to capture this plane representation faithfully. Edgerton spent much time trying to reconstruct these "demonstrations".

The basic ideas of linear perspective were soon afterwards applied by Masaccio in his *Trinity* fresco and by Masaccio (Figure 10) and Masolino in the *Bancacci Chapel* frescoes (Figure 11), and became widespread after 1435 when Alberti wrote the first text on linear perspective, the *Della pittura*.



Figure 9 The Baptistry from the location at which Brunelleschi depicted it, Retrieved from wikiart.org

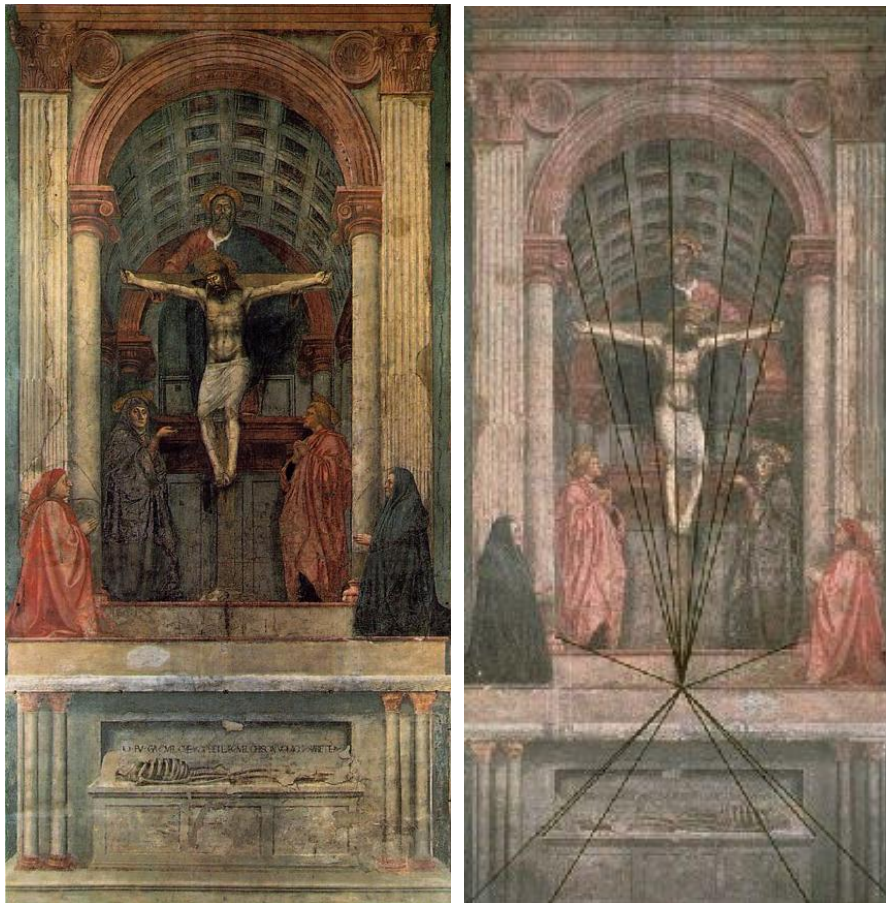


Figure 10 Masaccio, Trinity, 1427-28 Fresco, 21' 10 1/2" x 10' 4 7/8" (6.67 x 3.17 m) Santa Maria Novella, Florence. Retrieved from wikiart.org.

Allberti said: "I decide how large I wish the human figures in the painting to be. I divide the height of this man into three parts ... With this measure I divide the bottom line ... into as many parts as it will

hold."¹³ Then we fix the centric point (the observer straight-ahead points on the horizon). The suitable position for this centric point is no higher from the base line than the height of the man ... for in this way both the viewers and the objects in the painting will seem to be on the same plane. (Figure 10) Having placed the centric point, I draw lines from it to each of the divisions on the base line."¹⁴ Through the centric point, we draw the horizon, "This line is for me a limit or boundary, which no quantity exceeds that is not higher than the eye of the spectator... This is why men depicted standing in the parallel [to the horizon] furthest away are a great deal smaller than those in the nearer ones, a phenomenon which is clearly demonstrated by nature herself, for in churches we see the heads of men walking about, moving at more or less the same height, while the feet of those further away may correspond to the knee-level of those in front."¹⁵ ¹⁶

¹³ Alberti, Leon Battista. *On Painting*, trans. And intro. John R. Spencer, rev. ed (New Haven: Yale University Press) 1966. p. 54

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 54

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 55

¹⁶ See Edgerton (1975), p. 4 "How curious that an understanding of the mathematics of human pictorial representation occurred so late and so locally in history. And how regrettable that Brunelleschi and Alberti have received so little credit for the perceptual revolution that they fostered! Today we are the tired children of their discovery; the magic of perspective illusion is gone, and the "innate" geometry in our eyes and in our paintings is taken for granted. Linear perspective has been part and parcel of psyche and civilization for too many centuries, which is perhaps far less astonishing than the fact that it eluded men of all civilizations for a thousand years prior to the fifteenth century".



Figure 11 Masolino at the Brancacci Chapel, The Healing of Tabitha 1420s, retrieved from wikiart.org

We think of perspective no more than we think consciously of our extraordinary, mindless doodles on handy telephone scratch pads. And we think of it considerably less than we do of Columbus' discovery of America on which, as we shall see, it had some bearing.



Figure 12 Nuremberg. Dürer demonstrates the device Alberti called a 'veil'. The screen and corresponding grid on the artist's drawing paper are repeated for the viewer in the pattern of windows looking over a landscape.

Turning to an important example of accurate linear perspective, it is however, necessary to argue about Johannes Vermeer in the next chapter and his probable use of optical aids to achieve in his paintings a distinguishable perspective.

3.3. Johannes Vermeer

Jan Vermeer's brilliant use of perspective and the profound appreciation of depth seen in his paintings which are seldom in the works of other artists of his time have puzzled art historians ever since the artist's rediscovery in the mid-1860s.

In 1891, Joseph Pennel, the American lithographer and etcher was the first to suggest that Vermeer used some sort of mechanical device fitted with lens or mirrors., J. Pennell pointed out that the paintings of Johannes Vermeer of Delft (1632-1675) exhibited a certain "photographic quality".¹⁷ In addition, he pointed out the conspicuous discrepancy in scale of the two figures in Vermeer's *Officer and Laughing Girl* (Figure 13). Even though the officer is seated very close to the girl, he appears disproportionately large. In fact, the officer's head is about twice as wide as that of the smiling girl. Today, we are quite familiar with foreground objects appearing very large in snapshots but in 17th-century painting this is rather unusual.

After at least a century of debate, art historians have come to believe that this device was the camera obscura.¹⁸ "Art historians have generally been reluctant to study the implications of this evidence, feeling, no doubt, that it is not quite proper for their favored artists to resort to what has become regarded as a form of cheating."¹⁹

¹⁷ J. Pennell, "Photography as Hindrance and a Help to Art," J. Camera Club 5 (1891) p. 75.

¹⁸ A. Hyatt Mayor. *The Photographic Eye*. Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin (1947) pp. 15-26.

· L. Gowing, *Vermeer* (London: Faber and Faber, 1952).

· C. Seymour, "Dark Chamber and Light-Filled Room: Vermeer and the Camera obscura," *The Art Bulletin* 46 (1964) pp. 323-331.

· Schwarz, Heinrich. 1966. "Vermeer and the Camera Obscura". *Pantheon*. 170-182.

· Fink, Daniel A. 1971. "Vermeer's Use of the Camera Obscura: A Comparative Study". *The Art Bulletin* / Ed. John Shapley [U.a.]. 493-505.

· Wheelock, Arthur K. *Perspective, Optics, and Delft Artists Around 1650*. New York: Garland Pub, 1977.

· Wheelock, Arthur K., and Johannes Vermeer. *Jan Vermeer*. New York: Abrams, 1981.

· Wheelock, Arthur K. *Vermeer & the Art of Painting*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995.

¹⁹ Kemp, Martin. *The Science of Art: Optical Themes in Western Art from Brunelleschi to Seurat*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990. p. 196

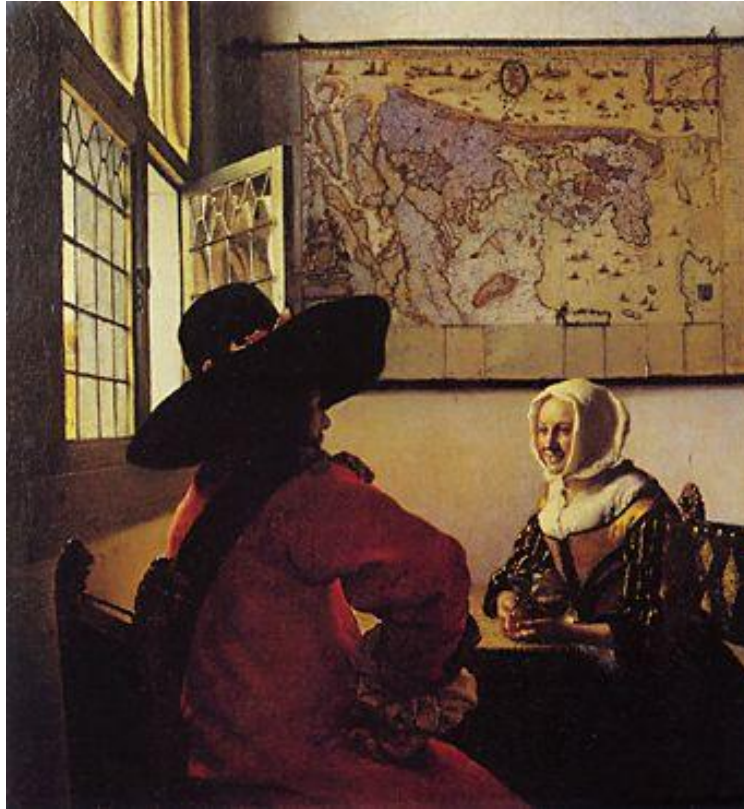


Figure 13 Johannes Vermeer - Officer and Laughing Girl - c. 1655-1660 - Oil on canvas, 50.5 x 46 cm. Frick Collection, New York

There are, however, some problems with the suggestion that Vermeer used a camera obscura. Firstly, the scenes in Vermeer's paintings were made up by the artist to convey the impression of upper middle class wealth. The expensive marble tiles floor, for instance, is used to emphasize depth, but didn't exist in reality. (Figure 14) The first floor room where he did most of his work would have had a polished wooden floor in which case the camera obscura would have been of use.



Figure 14 Jan Vermeer - A lady writing a letter 1671.
Retrieved from wikiart.org

Presuming that the tiles were likely not painted from life, Vermeer could have easily drawn a simple diagonal grid of the tiles on paper with the aid of linear perspective. Then the drawing could be easily transferred afterwards onto the canvas with different means, like the camera obscura projection or the simple string-and-pin technique. When the drawing was in place, he could then color the tiles dark or white delivering the example which most favorably accorded with the pictorial exigencies of each work. In this painting, the white tiles were separated from the black in order to avoid creating the so-called "accelerated" perspective that tends to dominate the viewer's attention and strongly pulls his eyes towards the back of the painting. This exact tile scheme was never repeated again.

Notably, Vermeer has never arranged the tiles perpendicularly to the perimeter of the background .

Next, the north facing windows in the room would have certainly not produced enough light to form a clearer vision in the camera. The light went through a simple hole rather than a complex lens and the smaller the hole the sharper the image and the dimmer it became. (Figure 15) Almost all the paintings known in which a camera obscura was used are of outdoor scenes where there would have been plenty of light.



Figure 15 Jan Vermeer - The girl with the glass of wine 1660. Retrieved from wikiart.org

Thirdly, there was no mention of a camera obscura in Vermeer's possessions when his wife Catherina had to sell off his works and his equipments to pay off his debts when he died suddenly of meningitis in 1675. It is possible Vermeer had already given it away or sold it but that might be viewed as stretching things a bit far.

Fourthly, any tracings from a particular camera obscura would have all been about the same size as each other, but a few of Vermeer's

paintings were large (ex. *A Woman Holding a Balance* 1665). The paintings which use perspective vary in size from 17" x 15" of *A Woman Holding a Balance* to 47" x 39" in the art of painting (1668), a very significant difference. Clearly using a tracing from a camera obscura might help Vermeer set out the painting. But it is unlikely that he would have simply copied the tracings onto a bare canvas, which rather ruins the point of it. Most importantly it seems that he did not really need a camera obscura at all.

The camera leaves no physical trace of its use, so there is, after all, absolutely no historical evidence to support the idea—but only the visual evidence exhibited by the paintings themselves.

In one point perspective which is by far the most common form inside a room, there is only one vanishing point from which an artist has to work. To set out where he/she wants his/her vanishing point to be, all he/she has to do is to draw lines from that point to create structure lines of his/her interior, the floors, the tiles, the windows, the sills and the furniture.

In 1998 Allan A. Mills²⁰ concluded that "it would not have been possible for Vermeer to have painted his interior scenes directly, at full size, from images produced by a room-type camera obscura incorporating the lenses of his time. Such images would have been much too dim and in any case would have been mirror images of the real scene." But, Mills did not dismiss that Vermeer "could have observed and even been stimulated to sketch the more brightly illuminated images produced at a smaller scale by a portable camera obscura." Mills argues that one of the strong points of the argument of the pro-camera obscura is the extreme accuracy of Vermeer's perspectives "would not have necessitated a camera." He adds that Vermeer could have created that accurate perspective by using the graphical methods taught by his friends De Vries and Hondius in addition to the famous technique of the pin inserted at the vanishing

²⁰ Mills, Alan. *Vermeer and the Camera obscura: Some Practical Considerations*, in *Leonardo*; Vol. 31, No. 3, 1998. pp. 213-218.

point and the thread attached to it and pulled tight to define the orthogonals of the image.

So far picture historians have found 15 of Vermeer's surviving works that had pin holes right at the vanishing point just where his line would have been secured; these holes were then filled with paint. So what are the reasons behind suggesting that Vermeer used the camera obscura as an aid to his painting?

"Several Dutch painters are said to have studied and imitated, in their paintings, the effect of the camera obscura and its manner of showing nature, which has led some people to think that the camera could help them to understand light or chiaroscuro. The effect of the camera is striking, but false."²¹

On one hand, the Dutch scholar P. T. A. Swillens, who had geometrically reconstructed the rooms shown in Vermeer's paintings and had thoroughly examined his painting methods, absolutely disapproved to see why Vermeer would have had the need to use any sort of optical aid, be they mirrors, camera lucida or the camera obscura. On the other hand, Charles Seymour was the first to the theory that Vermeer was guided by the images he saw in a camera obscura test in real life circumstances.²² Seymour analyzed similar objects in collaboration with the photographer Henry Beville; they decided to see if they could reproduce these foibles of Vermeer's technique using the 19th-century camera obscura with uncorrected lenses, borrowed from the Smithsonian Institute. They concentrated on the lion's head finial, the background tapestry, and the velvet of the costume of *Girl with a Red Hat* (Figure 16) – equivalent examples of which they obtained from museum collections and created similar lighting conditions to the ones represented in the painting.

²¹ Hyatt, A. Mayor *The Photographic Eye*, in Bulletin of the Metropolitan Museum of Art: New Series, Vol. 5, No. 1, 1946. p. 20.

²² Seymour, Charles. *Dark Chamber in a Light Filled Room*, in Art Bulletin: 46, 1964. (as cited in <http://www.essentialvermeer.com/>)



Figure 16 Arthur K. Wheelock Jr., "Johannes Vermeer/*Girl with the Red Hat*/c. 1665/1666," *Dutch Paintings of the Seventeenth Century*, NGA Online Editions.
<http://purl.org/nga/collection/artobject/60>

Looking at all of these through the camera they found soft focus effects, and "circles of confusion" on the lion's head, following Vermeer's rendering closely in their positions and shapes . It did not prove possible to make photographs using the antique camera itself. Instead a modern camera, suitably unfocused, was used to simulate the results, and to produce among others the photo reproduced in (Figure 17).

Seymour points out that some of the same soft-focus phenomena are to be detected – although they are less prominent – in the girl's face, especially in the shiny gloss of her lower lip, but that the image comes to a sharp focus at the rear of the head, as can be seen by the definite outline of the white collar. Notice also how the highlight on the pearl earring at the left begins to approximate a quadrilateral. There is a gradient, that is to say, in the degree of focus, from the foreground towards this focal plane.

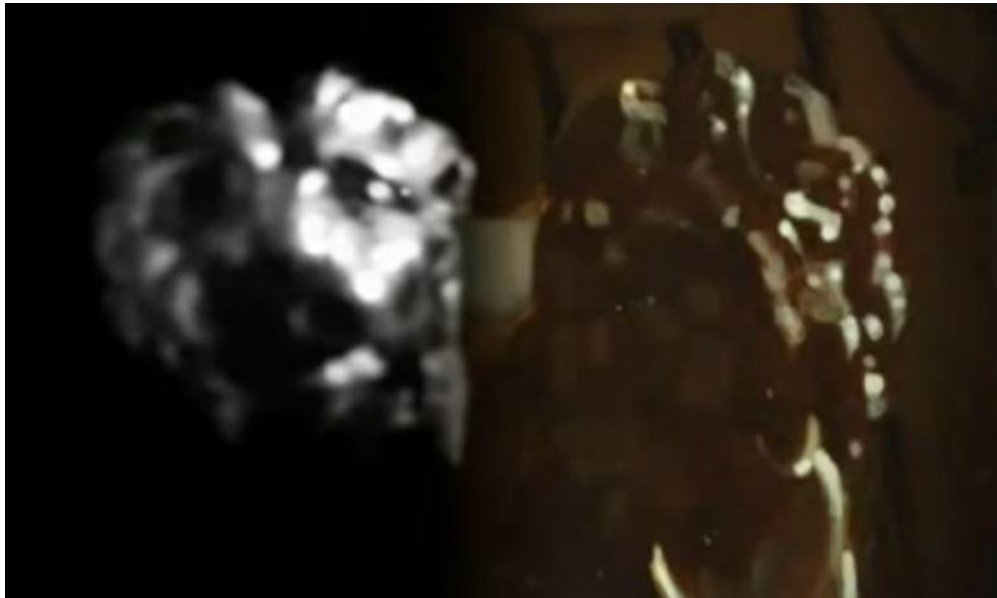


Figure 17 Left: an actual black and white image of a lion head finial as seen through a camera obscura. Retrieved from www.essentialvermeer.com

Seymour and Beville investigation was primarily limited to only two paintings by Vermeer, *the Girl with a Red Hat* and *the Girl with a Flute*. In the case of *Young Girl with a Flute* the viewpoint appears to be at about the height at which the lens of a box camera would be, if the instrument were set on a table; indeed, the edge of a table is just visible at the bottom of the painting. Seymour termed his work "preliminary" and suggested that "more research would be profitable, in particular regarding the relationships in the seventeenth century between such experimental milieu as Rome and Paris and England and Holland."²³

In the 1940's, the argument for Vermeer using the camera obscura was taken some steps further by A. Hyatt Mayor, a curator of the New York Metropolitan Museum. In an article entitled "The photographic eye" Hyatt Mayor spoke not only of distortion in size of near objects, but of color and tonality of Vermeer's painting which seemed to be "blended as perfectly as the ground glass of a camera" and of the highlights on

²³ Seymour Jr, *Dark chamber and light-filled room: Vermeer and the camera obscura*, Art Bulletin 46, 1964. pp. 323-31

foreground objects which "break up into dots like globules of halation swimming on a ground glass."²⁴

Fink "hoped that an indiscriminating search will not be initiated which looks for optical phenomena under every suspicious circular blob of paint" and concluded that "Vermeer was unique in his employment of the camera obscura because he left for us the evidence of his use of the instrument in his paintings. Not only was the camera obscura useful in helping Vermeer to render what he saw with the unaided eye, but it also provided significant enrichment of the subjects which he did not fail to include in his finished paintings."²⁵

While the theoretical debate as to whether Vermeer used a camera obscura or not made no considerable progress, two opposing camps of Vermeer's scholars were created. Those favorable chose to view Vermeer's use of the device as a sign that he was in tune with the spirit of his time. A time when the study of optics held an important place. The opposing camp argued that great artists basically have superlative skills and have no need for optical devices. Or that the characteristics of the camera celebrated in Vermeer's paintings may be explained by dominant painterly styles. Believers argued that skeptical art historians dreaded the use of mechanical devices, because it would diminish the stature of the artist as a creator and, perhaps, some of the prestige of the art historians themselves, who were key negotiators between the artist and the public. Other art historians eliminated the matter maintaining that an artist who uses a technological device is nothing to be ashamed of; it was another tool or medium, like brushes, paint or canvas, rather than a substitute for artistic talent.²⁶

²⁴ Hyatt, Mayor. *The Photographic Eye* Bulletin of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New Series, Vol. 5, No. 1, 1946. pp. 15-26.

²⁵ Fink, Daniel A. *Vermeer's Use of the Camera Obscura - a Comparative Study*. in *The Art Bulletin*, Vol. 53, No. 4, 1971. pp. 493-505.

²⁶ http://www.essentialvermeer.com/camera_obscura/co_one.html#U2RFXPmSzk_

4 ● Models of Seeing

The modern era as Martin Jay alleges, has been dominated by the sense of sight in a particular and fundamental way. Beginning with the Renaissance and the scientific revolution, modernity has been considered resolutely Ocularcentric.

According to the argument of McLuhan and Ong, the invention of printing has reinforced the privileging of the visual promoted by inventions such as the telescope and the microscope.²⁷

“The perceptual field thus constituted,’ concludes a typical account, ‘was fundamentally non-reflexive, visual and quantitative.”²⁸

In a wide range of critical accounts, vision and subjectivity are identified as equivalent. Seeing and knowing are conceived as the action of an isolated subject separated from the object that is being seen/known.

The approach to this part of research adopts the claim that everyone knows and sees in the same way, that is to say, all sight is the same. Sight is a universal and transcendental quality, which we hold in common. The critical accounts of vision identify a clear construction of (transcendental) subjectivity distinct from objectivity²⁹, a construction which is variously claimed to relate ‘metaphysical thought empirical science and capitalist logic all at once’³⁰

²⁷ McLuhan, Marshall. *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*. 1964; Ong, Walter J. *The Presence of the Word: Some Prolegomena for Cultural and Religious History*. 1967.

²⁸ Lowe, Donald M. *History of Bourgeois Perception*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982. p. 26.

²⁹ Jenks, C. *Visual Culture*, London Routledge, 1995a

³⁰ Foster, Hal. *Vision and Visuality*. Seattle: Bay Press, 1988.

The subsequent valorization of dualism encouraged the conception of seeing and thinking as equivalent processes in which ideas pass in review before an inner eye³¹ disembodied and detached from the object of its knowledge.

The main turn for the activities of seeing in the modern era has been the window as an object that frames the possibilities of vision.

The condition of the window implies a boundary between the perceiver and the perceived. It establishes as a condition/or perception a formal separation between a subject who sees the world and the world that is seen, and in so doing it sets the stage, as it were, for that retreat or withdrawal of the self from the world which characterizes the dawn of the modern age. Ensnared behind the window the self becomes an observing subject, a spectator as against a world, which becomes a spectacle, an object of vision.³²

Facts became associated with Descartes' principle of clear and distinct perception and Hobbes' objectivity with observation. Sight is alleged to have assumed a certain uncontested hegemony over western culture and its philosophical discourse.

Perspective:

Continuing the argument about the linear perspective that started in chapter 3, it is worth mentioning that the discovery of linear perspective made the distinction of subject and object possible as an epistemological problem.

A vast amount of literature has investigated numerous aspects and implications of linear perspective.³³

The Italian renaissance combined the notion that space has a centre with the Euclidean optics that produced a "cone of vision" that was first introduced by Leone Battista di Alberti in 1435.

³¹ Rorty, R. *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, Princeton University Press: 1979, p.49

³² Romanyszyn, Robert D. *Technology As Symptom and Dream*. London: Routledge, 1989

³³ Veltman: *Space, Time and Perspective in Print Media and Electronic Culture*, 2000

In late 13th century, artists were liberated from the theological and mathematical rules which had previously dominated and it was finally accepted to see a kind of space without the influence of religion and strict regulations.

In Alberti's perspective, the image is viewed through a rectangular window and the canvas is therefore divided in a geometrical way so that the sense of depth can be produced on its surface. This new powerful secular world vision, in which everything centers on the human eye was brought to surface and accordingly perspective made the single eye the centre of the visible world.

Everything converges on to the eye as to the vanishing point of infinity. The visible world is arranged for the spectator as the universe was once thought to be arranged by God.³⁴

This created the psychology of detachment between the one fixed eye of the mind and the materiality of the world, which now becomes an ordered, uniform system of abstract linear coordinates, and bifocal vision was removed from the scene in favor of an eternal central eye.

Yet, as Damisch observes, the perspectival painting reflects the actual structure of the mind. Perspective locks the observer into a reciprocal structure, a dialogue with an implied third person off to the side. This dialogue not only recapitulates linguistic exchanges, but also actively constitutes a subjective relationship. Perspective was in effect discovered, not invented; and it is inescapable.³⁵

4.1. Cartesian Perspectivalism

Réné Descartes is very often described as a visual philosopher whose ocularcentrism initiated the dominant scopic regime of the modern era. He is described as a symbolic figure of an age, which incorporates

³⁴ Berger, John, and Michael Dobb. *Ways of Seeing*. [London]: BBC Enterprises, 1972.

³⁵ Damisch, Hubert. *The origin of perspective*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1994.

knowing to seeing so that knowing is described as gazing with the mind's eye on mental representations that mirror the outside world.

For Descartes the image is not what we see. There are no species flitting through the air. And the picture is formed progressively on the retina; it is not just an instant object of vision. The mind constructs what we call a visual image from pressures and motions in the brain. Vision arises because objects of sight produce through the medium of the intervening transparent bodies, local motions in the optic nerve-fibers at the back of our eyes, and then in the regions of the brain where these nerves originate.³⁶

He believes that vision cannot be trusted. "Assuming that in order to sense, the mind needs to perceive certain images, transmitted by the objects to the brain, as our philosophers commonly assume as if there were yet other eyes within our brain with which we could perceive such images."³⁷ Descartes assumed that clear and distinct ideas available to any/every mental gaze would be identical to guarantee congruence between such ideas and the external world.



Figure 18 School of Piero della Francesca. View of an Ideal City, 1470. Urbino, Palazzo Ducale. Retrieved from wikiart.org

Albertian perspective likewise suggested that all viewers, occupying the correct viewpoint, would see the same orthogonal lines and vanishing point.

Thus Cartesian Perspectivalism, proposed an equivalence between the geometry of the world and the geometry of the mind. It is considered

³⁶ Descartes, R.: *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, trans J Cottingham, R. Stoothoff & D Murdoch, 2 vols, Cambridge University Press, 1985, p.1,153

³⁷ *Ibid*, p.1

as a temporal and transcendental relationship to a world of visible objects.

Martin Jay explained in his *Scopic Regimes of Modernity* that space becomes isotropic, rectilinear, abstract, and uniform. With the visual pyramid between view and the canvas then another between the canvas and the vanishing point, the object of study and the viewer are subjected to Cartesian persepectivalism.

Sight is assumed to be monocular, static, unblinking, saccadic (jumping from one focal point to the next rather than panning), and disembodied. The viewer is outside the viewed scene and captures an eternal moment.

The problems of this dominant scopic regime were exposed by Martin Jay in the Cartesian model, the intellect inspects entities modeled on retinal images.... In Descartes' conception – the one that became the basis for modern epistemology – it is representations, which are in the "mind".³⁸

An abstract fiction of seeing displaces and occludes the concrete hermeneutics of human perception 'Vision' is abstracted from the concrete activities of human perception and presented as a disengaged act of 'mental seeing '. Perception is treated ahistorically as an invariant faculty of the mind the visible is not understood as a texture of practical involvements and figural intentionalities, but as a geometric order of spatial distance through which the free-floating eye inspects the timeless fabric of the universe.³⁹

Pictures were seen not as representations, artificial constructs seeking to imitate an object, but as being closely related, or even identical, to that object.

Heidegger comments on the particular legacy of Cartesian Perspectivalism to Modernity, describing the era as the age of the

³⁸ Jay, Martin. 1992. "Scopic Regimes of Modernity". *Modernity and Identity* / Edited by Scott Lash and Jonathan Friedman.

³⁹ Heywood, Ian, and Barry Sandywell. *Interpreting Visual Culture Explorations in the Hermeneutics of the Visual*. London: Routledge, 1999. p.40

world picture: This does not mean a picture of the world but the world conceived and grasped as a picture the world picture does not change from an earlier medieval one, but rather the fact that the world becomes a picture at all is what distinguishes the essence of the modern age.⁴⁰

Cartesian Perspectivalism formed quite a number of study challenges in the late 19th and early 20 centuries for its presumption of an atemporal, disembodied viewer who is disengaged from what Maurice Merleau-Ponty has called the "flesh of the world".

It is unsuccessful to allow for a variety of subjectivities, visualities and ways of approaching knowledge, Cartesian Perspectivalism as an account for vision and visuality has to be recognized as inadequate.

The second visual subculture of modernity identified by Martin Jay is the Baconian Empiricism, it is associated with the private space of bourgeois prosperity of the Dutch in Holland and what Svetlana Alpers called "art of describing". In contrast to the Cartesian Perspectivalism of the Italian renaissance, Northern art suppresses narrative and textual reference in favor of description and visual surface. Rejecting the privileged, constitutive role of the monocular subject and instead emphasizing the prior existence of a world of objects depicted on the flat canvas, a world indifferent to the beholder's position in front of it. This world is not even contained entirely within the frame of Albertian window but seems to extend beyond it.⁴¹

When Bryson described Vermeer's paintings wrote: The bond with the viewer's physique is broken and the viewing subject is now proposed and assumed as a notional point, a non-empirical Gaze."⁴²

⁴⁰ Heidegger, Martin. *The Question Concerning Technology, and Other Essays*. New York: Harper & Row, 1977.

⁴¹ Jay, Martin. 1992. "Scopic Regimes of Modernity". *Modernity and Identity / Edited by Scott Lash and Jonathan Friedman*. p.12

⁴² Bryson, Norman. *Vision and Painting: The Logic of the Gaze*. London: Macmillan, 1983, p.112



Figure 19 Gerrit Dou. A Poulterer's Shop, c. 1617. London, National Gallery of Art.

Later visual models are said to be anticipated by the art of describing, a direct lineage between Alberti's *velo* (veil) and the grids of modern art. While the *velo* assumed a three-dimensional world, the grids did not.

Although the grid that Ptolemy proposed, and those that Mercator later imposed, share the mathematical uniformity of the Renaissance perspective grid, they do not share the positioned viewer, the frame, and the definition of the picture as a window through which an external viewer looks. On the accounts the Ptolemaic grid, indeed cartographic grids in general, must be distinguished from, not confused with, the perspectival grid. The projection is, one might say,

viewed from nowhere. Nor is it to be looked through. It assumes a flat working surface.⁴³

With the development of technology, a new visual model, a hybrid of the *velo* and the grid would better identify the contemporary projection screens. A mode assuming a persectival representation which is not limited by a frame nor by the position of the observer. This is better represented by Jay's third scopic model (The third visual subculture).

The third visual subculture of modernity discussed by Martin Jay, is called " Baroque" it expresses the bizarre and peculiar, the irregular, and seems to be the most significant alternative to the hegemonic style of Cartesian persepectivialism. It marks a surplus of images, opacity, and unreadability and it rejects monocular geometricalization, the illusion of a homogeneous world seen from a distance from a God's-eye view, it finds its philosophical correlate in Leibniz's pluralism of monadic viewpoints and it notices contradictions between surface and depth, a nonhierarchical multiplicity of visual spaces.

Jay acknowledges the plurality of scopic regimes and finds that they can interact, compete and sometimes overlap.

4.2. Flâneurie

To the perfect spectator, the impassioned observer, it is an immense joy to make his domicile amongst numbers, amidst fluctuation and movement, amidst the fugitive and the infinite. To be away from home, and yet to feel at home, to behold the world, to be in the midst of the world, and yet to remain hidden from the world, these are some of the minor pleasures of such independent, impassioned and impartial

⁴³ Alpers, Svetlana. *The Art of Describing: Dutch Art in the Seventeenth Century*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983. p.138

spirits, whom words can only clumsily describe the observer is a prince who always rejoices in his incognito.⁴⁴

The modern era is characterized as a new stage in the dominance of the visual as well as a social and cultural discourse. The French poet Baudelaire, in attempting to get accustomed with the large scale reordering of the built environment of his native city Paris, stereotypically coined the term 'modernity' to indicate a prevalent and unsettling experience of newness, characterized by the transitory, the ephemeral, and the contingent.

As Crary argues, the social and economic shifts of modernity coincided with, and caused, new representational practices, in fact, a "sweeping reorganization of visual culture".⁴⁵

In this environment, where the social multiplication of images required and produced a fundamentally different register of subjective experience which was characterized by distraction and diversion. The relationship between viewer and viewed was recast as a dynamic and fleeting encounter, perpetually mobile and unstable, in which the viewer's attention was solicited by an incessant series of 'attractions, shocks and surprises'.⁴⁶

"This type of reception was perceived very early on as a specifically modern form of subjectivity. More than a mere reflection of urban life and industrial technology, the principle of short term and excessive stimulation had been elaborated by the media of an emerging consumer culture from the mid-nineteenth century on in advertising, shop window displays and a whole range of consumer oriented spectacles - World Fairs, Panoramas, Dioramas, amusement parks".⁴⁷

⁴⁴ Baudelaire, Charles, and Jonathan Mayne. *The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays*. London: Soho Book, 1986. Print, p.34

⁴⁵ Crary, Jonathan. *Suspensions of Perception: Attention, Spectacle, and Modern Culture*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1999, p.2

⁴⁶ Hansen, Miriam. *Babel and Babylon: Spectatorship in American Silent Film*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1991, p.29

⁴⁷ Ibid.

As a consequence, Jenks identifies a serious commitment to surface, in Modernity in which "the prime cultural value" now becomes "face-value".⁴⁸

Baudelaire proposed *flâneur* as the model for an observer appropriate to the new cultural domain, a figure who has been embraced by a wide range of researchers as both a product of modernity and a metaphor for its experience. The cities of modernity were the playground for the *flâneur's* gaze. As both a "spectator and depicter of modern life", the *flâneur* is characterized as a "panoramically situated" spectator who spends his abundant leisure time "botanizing on the asphalt"⁴⁹. He moves 'through space and among the people with a viscosity that both enables and privileges vision'⁵⁰ declaring their mutual independence from, and insight into, the urban scenes he passed.

Modern attention as exemplified by *flânerie*, was conceived not only as visual and mobile, but also fleeting and short-lived, surrounded by visual stimuli and relying on the encompassing power of his perception. The *flâneur* moves freely in the city, determined entirely on pursuing this "seemingly unique and individual experience of reality"⁵¹

The mobile *flâneur*, lazily walking along the streets of modern cities, is conceived essentially as "everywhere in possession of his incognito"⁵². He passively records and describes the sights of city life and moves on. The sounds, smells and tastes of the city do not interest him. There is no place in the *flâneur's* vision for observation, reaction or interaction.

Considering the relationship between the viewer and the viewed as a transaction in which both terms are equally compromised, it is necessary to describe a visuality in which the viewer positively

⁴⁸ Jenks, Chris. *Visual Culture*. London: Routledge, 1995, p.7

⁴⁹ Benjamin, W., *The Arcades Project*. Trans. H. Eiland and K. McLaughlin. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Belknap Press, 1999

⁵⁰ Jenks, Chris. *Visual Culture*. London: Routledge, 1995, p.146

⁵¹ Gleber, Anke. "In D Andrew (ed) The Image in Dispute Art and Cinema in the Age of Photography." *The Art of Taking a Walk: Flânerie, Literature, and Film in Weimar Germany*. Austin: U of Texas, 1999, p.55

⁵² Baudelaire, Charles, and Jonathan Mayne. *The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays*. London: Soho Book, 1986. Print, p.9

participates. Relations of participation could be in terms of interjections during exhibitions and/or in terms of a searching process within the content of projected screens for example.

In the late nineteenth century, consumer culture was associated with the development of evident new modern cultural forms. Advertising such as billboards became the norm of the modern world, newspapers and magazines were requesting the attention of prospective consumers. Photography and cinematography had firmly developed and flourished in this environment of consumption and spectacular display of accelerated and fleeting images, and became equivalent to the dynamics of the era. Benjamin wrote that in a film, perception in the form of shocks was established as a formal principle. That which determines the rhythm of production on a conveyor belt is the basis of the rhythm of reception in the film⁵³. Building on the work of Benjamin, many others theorists have examined links between photography and modern perception.

⁵³ Benjamin, Walter. *Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism*. London: NLB, 1973, p.132

4.3. Spectator vs. Observer

In societies where modern conditions of production prevail, all of life presents itself as an immense accumulation of spectacles. Everything that was directly lived has moved away into a representation.⁵⁴

As previously specified, Cartesian Perspectivalism, in its exempt of the fixed monocular geometrically based viewpoint, proposes a one-way relation of seeing, as does *flâneurie* within the unfocused eye that passively records the modern city (*the spectacle*).

Both Cartesian perspectivalism and *flâneurie* share an acknowledgement of the disengaged, contemplative subject whose detached gaze registers an environment of images and commodity forms. The other senses are completely ignored in what Jay terms a “de-eroticization of vision”⁵⁵. Jenks has mentioned that the spectacle indicates rules of what to see and how to see it”.⁵⁶ It ignores the other forms of cognition.

Modernity and its visual environment, whether it was Cartesian perspectivalist, baconian, baroque or *flâneurist*, has taught its viewers how to look. Spectacle offers a descriptive surface of the world as a strategy of domination against any depth of involvement with that world.⁵⁷

Descartes preferred to conceive the viewer as a spectator rather than an actor. Jay argues that the implications of the hegemony of Cartesian Perspectivalism and its valorisation of the abstract and quantitatively conceived visual order forced the dissolution of participatory modes of

⁵⁴ Debord, Guy, *The Society of the Spectacle*. Detroit: Red and Black, 1977, p.1

⁵⁵ Martin Jay, 'The Scopic Regimes of Modernity', in Hal Foster (ed.), *Vision and Visuality*, Seattle, Bay Press, 1988, p.8

⁵⁶ Jenks, C., *Watching your Step The History and Practice of the Flâneur*, in C. Jenks, (ed.) *Visual Culture*, London Routledge, 1995, p. 155

⁵⁷ Polan, D. *Film Theory Re-Assessed. In: Continuum: The Australian Journal of Media and Culture* 1, 2, 1987

engagement and the widening of the gap between spectator and spectacle.⁵⁸

Cited by Jay, Bryson contrasted Cartesian Perspectivalism with the “performative - the idea of performance and the insertion of the body into the optical field”⁵⁹. Privileging the individual over the communal, the spectacle becomes something that demands passivity. Implementing a one way discourse, community and interdependence are alienated. As McQuire has argued, modernization has been identical to the disintegration of tradition and the destabilization of links between locality and identity⁶⁰.

Modernity’s preference for experiencing a spectacle was addressed to an audience of isolated individuals rather than a crowd. The achievement of the appropriate gaze thus required the conversion of the embodied, heterogeneous crowd of earlier times into a disciplined and static audience. Where once the body of the viewer was a central part of the crowd and its active, disruptive, spectacular theatricality⁶¹ modern vision required its training into a static and passive form of viewing spectatorship⁶².

4.4. Conclusions

This chapter discusses a series of challenges that have resulted from the hegemony of the Cartesian perspectivalist tradition which maintains an abstracted, intangible and disengaged relationship between the viewer and the viewed. Additionally, its historical foundations have been examined.

⁵⁸ Martin Jay, *'The Scopic Regimes of Modernity'*, in Hal Foster (ed.), *Vision and Visuality*, Seattle, Bay Press, 1988, p. 8

⁵⁹ Ibid. p. 25

⁶⁰ McQuire, Scott, *Visions of Modernity: Representation, Memory, Time and Space in the Age of the Camera*, Orvell, Miles, *The Real Thing*, 1998, p. 6

⁶¹ Sennett, R. *The Fall of Public Man*. London Faber & Faber, 1977

⁶² Stallybrass, P & White, A. *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression*, London Methuen, 1986

The approaches of Crary and Jay in highlighting the requirement to project visuality historically, in relation to their social and historical environments and situations, provided a more sophisticated but eventually more useful ways to see seeing and think about thinking.

Furthermore, some of visual culture writers motivate us to use vision as a critique of vision, to measure and determine which mode of vision in the modern age has failed to realize its purposes.

In discussing the inadequacies of the Cartesian Perspectivalist approach to visuality, Bryson argues that although northern painting follows another perspectival system “Spherical rather than flat”, its commitment to perspective is not fundamentally different from that in the south.⁶³ As a response, Jay said that it is rather Baroque art that is radically different in terms of perspective.

Based on the theory that the relationship between the viewer and the viewed must be recognized as an articulated and historical construction, it is the argument of this approach that our seeing is a work of establishment, a product of a complex historical and cultural discourse.

⁶³ Martin Jay, *'The Scopic Regimes of Modernity'*, in Hal Foster (ed.), *Vision and.Visuality*, Seattle, Bay Press, 1988, p. 25

5. ● The Emergence of Photography

With every technological change, people generally tend to be skeptical of and sometimes intimidated by the created possibilities that it brings with and their need to be controlled.

Susan Sontag was one of the elitists who attacked the ills of the civilization by blaming technology that has evolved along with the need for spreading social change.⁶⁴ Her book “On Photography” was seemingly negative about the value of photography, although not explicitly so. Indeed the book aroused a lot interest in photographic and para-photographic circles notwithstanding the fact that it has received a lot of different criticism. The New York Review of Books for instance, which published one of the reprinted essays, referred to her as ‘the high priestess of photography’. M. Misani, in an editorial in his Print Letter (No. 15, May-June 1978) comes out rather strongly against the book because of its sweeping generalities and numerous inaccuracies.⁶⁵

On the other hand, for Walter Benjamin, modern technology destroys *principium individuationis* and gives access to mythical and collective powers of great importance for the survival of mankind.

⁶⁴ Sontag, Susan: *On Photography* p.82, said: “Each of these situations suggests a different use for the photographs but none can secure their meaning. As Wittgenstein argued for words, that the meaning is the use—so for each photograph. And it is in this way that the presence and proliferation of all photographs contributes to the erosion of the very notion of meaning, to that parceling out of the truth into relative truths which is taken for granted by the modern liberal consciousness.”

⁶⁵ See Review by: Jacques Halber: *Leonardo*, Vol. 12, No. 4 (Autumn, 1979) The MIT Press Stable, 1979, p. 344. URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1573934>

This chapter provides arguments and examples of artists who were keen in uncovering the new techniques they had in their time and their different reactions towards the emergence of photography.

5.1. Eugène Delacroix

Going back to the 19th century Delacroix witnessed, as did all of his generation, the emergence of photography. A tool which was to him both intriguing and fascinating and which occupied a special place in most of his work. It is the source of a deep reflection of artistic truth versus photographic realism.

Far from being regarded as a possible competitor to painting, Delacroix followed with interest the emergence and development of photography. He collected photographic reproductions of works of art - frescoes by Raphael, Rubens' paintings or sculptures of the cathedral. Although he did not take photographs himself he preferred to have nude models, both male and female photographed by Eugène Durieu. The photos were a valuable tool for drawing practice during his stay in the province because they met his very personal criteria.

In the 1850s, when photography tended to substitute the engraving portraits of famous contemporary illustrious. Delacroix was asked by the critic Théophile Silvestre in 1852 to pose for Victor Laisné for the publication of his *Histoire des artistes vivants*. Delacroix appeared dandy, in *Homme du Monde*, even though his facial expression remained distant.

Notwithstanding that, the artist had a very open mind about photography and was one of the few renowned painters in the newly founded *Société Héliographique*; he was notoriously discontented with his portraits. Among a hundred daguerreotype portraits, he wrote in 1859, there is not a single one that is satisfactory. Nonetheless, that did not keep him from having his portrait taken over and over again. (Figure 20) That being the case, in 1853, he faced the camera of Eugène Durieu, the photographer with whom he planned to collaborate for model studies, Delacroix seemed equally frozen. Undeniably, the sittings were for him discomfort and a waste of time.

In 1858, Delacroix, went to Félix Nadar who admired him as a painter and wanting to complete *the portraits series of great men* that he planned to show the following year at the *French Society of Photography*. The pose of Delacroix is full of authority and the lighting hits the face well. However, the painter was unhappy with his appearance and begged the photographer to destroy the negative and the samples, fortunately, the latter was not done. Pierre Petit continued the tradition of effigies of famous men of his time in the same way and around 1862 succeeded to take beautiful portraits. Neither the look nor the expression of the model (maybe more relaxed) had the force that Nadar had been able to provide, even after he slightly improved the results through reframing the samples he was exhibiting.



Figure 20 Portraits of Eugène Delacroix, 1842–1862 (by Léon Riesener, Eugène Durieu, Victor Laisné, Pierre Petit). From *Delacroix et la photographie*, ed. Christophe Leribault (Paris, 2008).

It is important to note however, that Delacroix admired photography very much that he wrote in his diary:

"How I regret that such a wonderful invention arrived so late, as far as I am concerned. The possibility of studying such results would have

had an influence on me of which I can only get an idea from the use they still are to me."⁶⁶

George Eastman House possessed two albums of photographic nudes that Delacroix had installed. Occasionally he also bought professional daguerreotypes. The album depicts many "heads" and examples of anatomy; however, it is probably not the collection of photographs made for Delacroix.

There is a close parallel between one of Durieu's photographs in *the Eastman album* and a drawing by Delacroix, which indicates that both the photograph and the drawing were executed in the same setting. (Figure 21) and (Figure 22).

Despite the difference in poses, there are marked similarities between the sketch and the photograph. Perhaps the most obvious of which are the leopard skin underneath the model, the type of female body, the shape of the face, and the breasts. There is also the similarity of the white cloth drapery, which partially covers the model's legs in the drawing that can also be observed in the photographic study. "August 24, 1854 - All the preceding days, took walks; also made drawings from Durieu's photographs."⁶⁷

⁶⁶ Damisch, Hubert. *La peinture en écharpe: Delacroix, la photographie*. [Paris]: Klincksieck, 2010, p. 77

⁶⁷ Delacroix, Eugène, and Walter Pach. *The Journal of Eugene Delacroix*. New York: Covici, Friede, 1937. p. 415



Figure 21 Eugène Delacroix, *Nude female figure, sketched at Dieppe*, 1854, Fogg Museum, Harvard. Retrieved from: www.harvardartmuseums.org/art/297913



Figure 22 Eugène Durieu, *Reclining Nude*, photograph, c. 1854, George Eastman House website.

Delacroix's Odalisque

The album of thirty-two photographs kept at the *Department of Prints and Photography* of the *National Library of France* that is commonly called *Album Durieu* ⁶⁸ (the name of the author of the photographs) mainly contains pictures of two naked models, a man and a woman, taken by Eugène Durieu in the presence and guidance of Delacroix in two successive posing sessions on, Sunday 18 and 25 June 1854.

The examination of the album shows that it is divided into four distinct sequences. (Figure 23) is a sitting naked male model. His black beard and flowing hair are absolutely distinguishing him from the model with the finely appearing muscles on (Figure 25). This trial is probably part of a different set provided by Durieu to Delacroix.

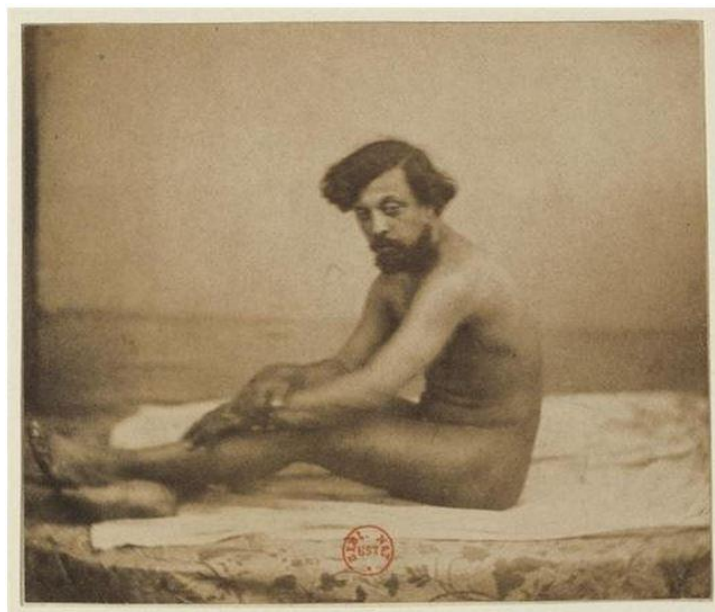


Figure 23 Eugène Durieu – *Nude Male Model Sitting* – 1854 - Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF)

⁶⁸ The Album Durieu can be seen at the National Library of France, Prints and Photography Department. A preview of the album is here: <http://www.photo-arago.fr/Explorer/Auteurs/D/DURIEU-Eug%C3%A8ne/Album-Durieu>



Figure 24 Eugène Delacroix - *Study of legs of a man sitting and study of a head* - Pencil. 20.3 x 15.2 cm - Museum of Fine Arts and Archaeology of Besancon

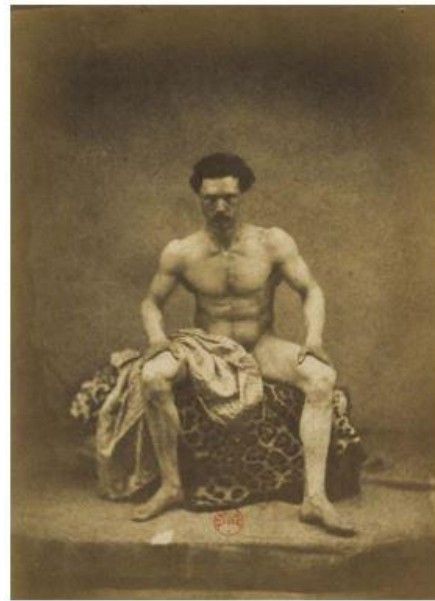


Figure 25 Eugène Durieu - *Male Nude sitting legs apart, on a panther skin* (Plate XV Album Durieu) - salted paper prints made from paper negatives 17.8 x 12.8 cm BnF, Department of Prints and Photography © BnF

The album contains two other studies (Figure 26 and Figure 27) a young woman, one of which served as the model for the small odalisque in 1857 (private collection). The model is Miss Hamély, a petite actress who appeared in tableaux and pantomimes at the theatre de la Porte-Saint-Martin (1853) but who also posed for photographers.

The photographs in that album are collotypes, meaning they are printed from negative to paper. The collotype is characterized by a slightly blurring effect. This effect made photography more useful and tolerable to Delacroix, the grain of the negative paper creates less precise edges in the prints than the daguerreotype's or the collodion prints on glass.



Figure 26 Eugène Durieu - *Nude female model on an ottoman* – 1854
- Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF)

The freedom that Delacroix had in the painting in relation to the photograph confirms that he only uses the latter as an aid to his imagination. Photography is therefore amalgamated, among other ingredients, in to a personal universe, not to mention the colors of the painting.



Figure 27 Eugène Durieu, Nu féminin assis sur un divan, la tête soutenue par un bras, 1853, épreuve sur papier salé.



Figure 28 Eugène Delacroix, Odalisque, 1857, huile sur bois.

"Painted a little on the odalisque from the photograph," Delacroix wrote in his journal, "but without much energy."⁶⁹

Above is a photo of Miss Hamély taken in the presence of Delacroix (Figure 27) and its painting transfiguration on the right (Figure 28). The body shape is preserved, but unlike the photograph, the decor, the clothing and the color create a different representation. It is exciting to see this affirmation of the necessity of vagueness, blurry photography, this obligation of unreality and non-compliance imposed on the photograph, without which the painting could not exist.

It is important to note additionally, that painters would traditionally avoid the incompatibilities in their compositions and look for unusual perspectives and features, Delacroix still felt it appropriate to soften the harsh perspective of his *Odalisque* (1857). Cropping also tends

⁶⁹ Delacroix, Eugène, and Walter Pach. *The Journal of Eugene Delacroix*. New York: Covici, Friede, 1937.p. 447

sometimes to produce odd angles of perspective, such as aggressive abutments of near and distant zones. This effect, which is exaggerated by the flattening effect of the camera, is of course, not exclusive to photography.

Next are some other examples of Delacroix sketches drawn from Durieu's photographs.



Figure 29 *Reclining Male Nude*, after Thevelin, 1854



Figure 30 Eugene Durieu, *Untitled*, 1853



Figure 31 Eugène Delacroix, *Study of nude woman in profile*, Musée du Louvre

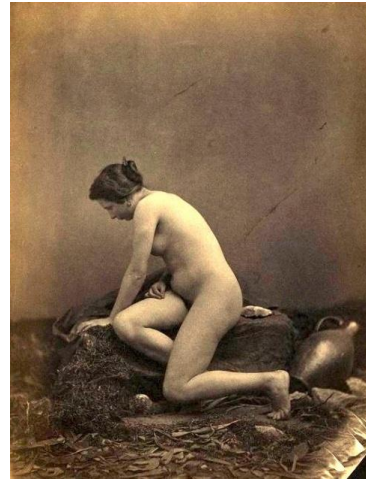


Figure 32 Louis-Camille d'Olivier, *Female nude*, 1855

5.2. Gustave Caillebotte

Gustave Caillebotte seemed to follow Delacroix's fascination for the camera. Between October 2012 and January 2013 *The Schirn Art Gallery*⁷⁰ devoted an exhibition to some of Caillebotte's masterpieces. The exhibition showed his cityscapes against the backdrop of what the photography of his time was capable of.

Gustave Caillebotte is regarded as an impressionist inspired by photography. In his paintings, he goes beyond what his contemporary photographers were producing, extending the medium's potential, and in so doing anticipating something that was first to be realized in photography 50 years later.⁷¹

Of all his paintings, *Les raboteurs de parquet*, with its very unusual representation of the laborers, was the most likely to provoke a scandal. But in this case some critics, in fact most of the press, suggested holding breath when walking past it - so tangible was the stench of the workers' sweat. (Figure 33)

⁷⁰ Schirn Kunsthalle Frankfurt Römerberg 60311 Frankfurt, <http://www.schirn.de/>

⁷¹ Without him, Impressionism today would be quite different, because he played a crucial role in supporting big-hitting French Impressionist artists such as Claude Monet, Auguste Renoir, who were very close friends of his, not only financially by giving them a monthly allowance as it were, but also renting studios on their behalf, etc. He was also happy to buy works from these artists, who in their day, namely the 1870s, were not yet massively recognized or held in particularly high esteem; not only did he buy, he bought with an excellent feel for things, as he acquired masterpieces.



Figure 33 Gustave Caillebotte, *Les raboteurs de parquet* 1875, Oil on canvas, 102 cm × 146.5 cm, Musée d'Orsay, Paris

The painting is an in-depth study of movement that precisely explores the different sequences involved in scraping the parquet floor. It is clear what the viewer can notice here, namely Caillebotte's depiction of the room, the very unusual spatial perspective, the sense that the workers are leaning slightly towards the spectator. The room in question stands out for the interesting interplay of the light and shadow. "An anti-artistic painting, painting as neat as glass, bourgeois painting, because of the exactitude of the copying."⁷² Said Emile Zola after praising the technical execution of the painting.

In the back of the room, we see the city through the ornamental bars, meaning that the view is broken up into small segments. This was considered as a completely radical approach in painting at the time, let alone photography, which would not embrace this technique until much later.

⁷² Varnedoe, Kirk, and Gustave Caillebotte. *Gustave Caillebotte*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987.p.187

László Moholy-Nagy presented a very similar view in the 1920s, A bird's eye view through the railing of a balcony and down onto a streetscape, which seems to disintegrate in a very similar way. Demonstrating once again that Caillebotte had a pioneering role in the emergence of a new vision.

Furthermore, it is worth adding the *Bitumiers'* (pavers) photo by the photographer Eugène Atget which was taken in 1899 or 1900, to Caillebotte's *Les raboteurs* to allow a comparison between the representation of the painter and the documentation of the photographer. (Figure 34) He was using a new perspective closely bound up with the fact that perception was to be revolutionized in the 19th century.



Figure 34 Eugène Atget, *Bitumiers* (1899-1900), Gelatin silver printing-out-paper print. Retrieved from: www.moma.org/collection/browse_results.php?object_id=46820

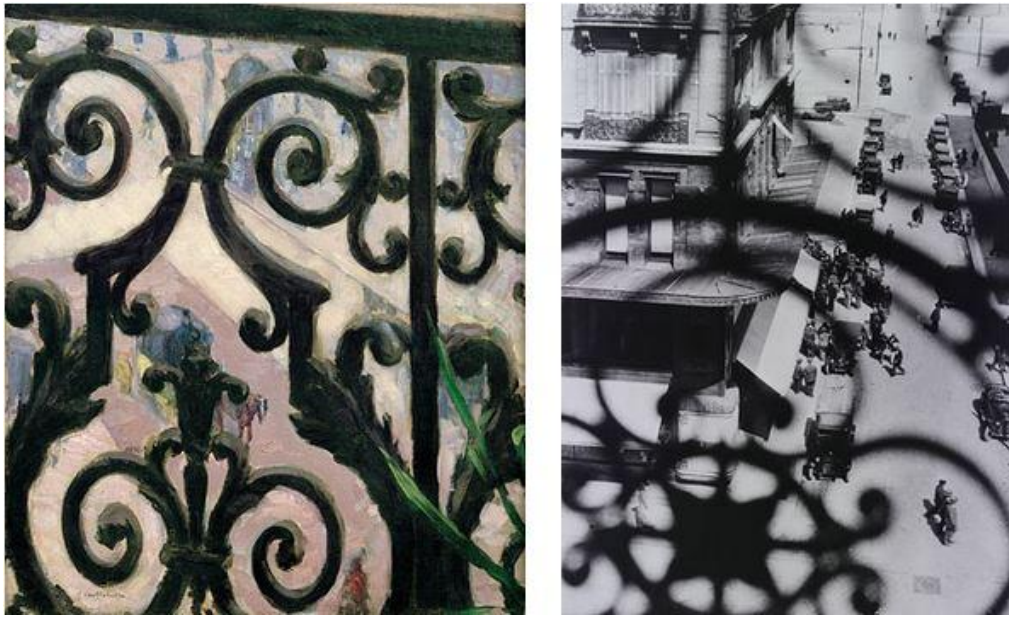


Figure 35 On the right: Gustave Caillebotte, *View through the balcony*, 1880, oil on canvas 83,5 x 73 cm, Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam. On the left: László Moholy-Nagy, *Marseille*, 1928, Rheinisches Bildarchiv Köln.

Very often, the relationship between painting and photography is quite striking, this can be seen, for example, in Caillebotte's most famous painting *Le Pont de l'Europe*, which depicts the same steel-skeleton architecture that was also the focus in photography at that time, something would have been instantly recognizable to Parisians of the day. (Figure 36) This complex, striking image is dominated by the aggressive structure of the bridge along which stroll a *flâneur* - his facial features said to be those of Caillebotte himself - and a female companion.⁷³

⁷³ The face of the same woman is seen in an 1877 and an 1884 painting by Caillebotte. M. BERHAUT: (Caillebotte: Sa vie et son oeuvre, Paris [1978] pp.100 and 170) identifies them as portraits of Mme Hagen, a friend of the artist. She writes that the former is probably the same painting that appeared in the fourth impressionist exhibition of 1879 under the title 'Portrait de Mme. H ...'



Figure 36 Gustave Caillebotte, *Le Pont de l'Europe* (1876) 125 x 180 cm, Musée du Petit Palais, Geneva.

A rediscovered photograph of Caillebotte and his dog in the courtyard of the Louvre, taken around 1876 by his brother Martial, appears to have been used, with a few changes, in the painting.



Figure 38 Martial Caillebotte, Man in a top hat (c. 1876). Photograph. (Private collection, Paris). Retrieved from: <http://www.schirn-magazin.de/>



Figure 37 Gustave Caillebotte (c. 1876) Striding man in a top hat, Pencil, 53.7 x 19.7 cm. (Private collection, Paris). Retrieved from: <http://www.schirn-magazin.de/>

Caillebotte may have used the photograph of himself and his dog in reversed position to portray the man in *Le Pont de l'Europe*. In both the photograph and the painting he wears a top hat and double-breasted coat. A drawing of the man (Figure 37) shows him leaning to the left as in the photograph. The explanation for the switch of direction in the painting may be the rule of etiquette that a gentleman should walk closest to the roadway to protect his female companion.⁷⁴

⁷⁴ Wagner, Leopold. *Manners, Customs, and Observances: Their Origin and Signification*. London: W. Heinemann, 1968., pp.62-63.

The unusual and “distorted” perspectives typical of some photography have also been credited with the idea for the seemingly exaggerated perspective of works by artists such as Caillebotte. Certainly there is convincing documentary evidence that these perspectives are attributable to his use of wide-angle lens photographs in his preparatory sketches for paintings such as *Paris Street; Rainy Weather* (1877) and *Young Man at his Window*.



Gustave Caillebotte, *Young Man at his Window* (1876)



Perspective of artificially wide-angle lens photograph of same scene (Varnedoe, op cit)



"Normal" perspective photograph of same scene (Varnedoe, op cit)

Other photographic effects on perspective can also be identified. The distortions caused by extreme photographic close-ups were grotesquely reflected in Munch's double portrait of the Painter Henrik Lund and his Wife Gunibjor (1905/6). The radical foreshortening in Caillebotte's *The Oarsmen* (1877) is based on a photo taken by his brother Martial – a small square drawing in pencil of the oarsmen on tracing paper has survived which has the same size as the usual measurements of glass negatives of that period. Similarly, the extreme foreshortening of the corpse in Eakins' *The Gross Clinic* as an example reflects the influence of the photographic studies with which the artist was deeply interested. However, despite claims that such effects in Eakins' work were “conceivable only after photography”, this type of foreshortening is obviously not always attributable to photography, and there are countless examples of pre-photographic paintings exhibiting the same effect – Rembrandt's *The Anatomy Lesson of Nicolaes Tulp* (1632) and Pozzo's *Entrance of St Ignatius into Paradise* (1694) are two of many.

On a purely speculative note, it could also be observed that the effects created in wide angle, short focus photographic portraits seem to anticipate some of the distortionary effects of Cubism.⁷⁵

⁷⁵ <http://www.artinsociety.com/>

5.3. Henri Matisse and Brassai

Matisse:

Photography can provide the most precious documents [...] If it is taken by a man of taste, the photograph will have the appearance of art. [...] The style of photographs is of no importance; they will always be striking because they show us nature, and every artist will find a world of sensations in that.⁷⁶

Brassai:

The most beautiful photo will probably never be worth a beautiful drawing – since the discovery of photography, we have heard that often enough – but can the most beautiful drawings in the world ever replace the role of photography as an irreplaceable witness of the instant, a favored substitute for reality?⁷⁷

Matisse was one painter who used photography as an aid in his work. In the 1930s, he started to hire a photographer to make documentations of his progress after every canvas, instead of starting a new canvas he used the photographs to preserve states of his paintings and consulted them as he worked to compare them to the painting in order to see whether he has advanced or regressed.

He once exhibited six of his recent paintings at the *Galerie Maeght* in Paris; each was juxtaposed with large photographs documenting the evolution of the canvas displayed beside them. Showing his work process gave him the opportunity to dispel the notion that he worked spontaneously. By agreeing to make the photographs public, Matisse

⁷⁶ Dominique Fourcade, *Henri Matisse, Ecrits et propos sur l'art*, Paris, Hermann 1972, p. 60

⁷⁷ Alain Sayag and Annick Lionel-Marie, *Brassai*, Paris, éditions Centre Pompidou/Seuil, 2000, p. 213

tacitly acknowledged that their presence added to the viewers' understanding and appreciation of his work.

In 1935, Matisse documented the different stages of his painting *The Pink Nude*. He said in an interview in 1936: "...At each stage, I reach a balance, a conclusion. At the next sitting, if I find a weakness in the whole, I find my way back into the picture by means of the weakness--I re-enter through the breach--and reconceive the whole. ...At the final stage the painter finds himself freed and his emotion exists complete in his work." ⁷⁸ (Figure 39)

⁷⁸ H. Matisse, *Statements to Teriade*, in J. Flam, op. cit., p.74 (originally published in 1936)

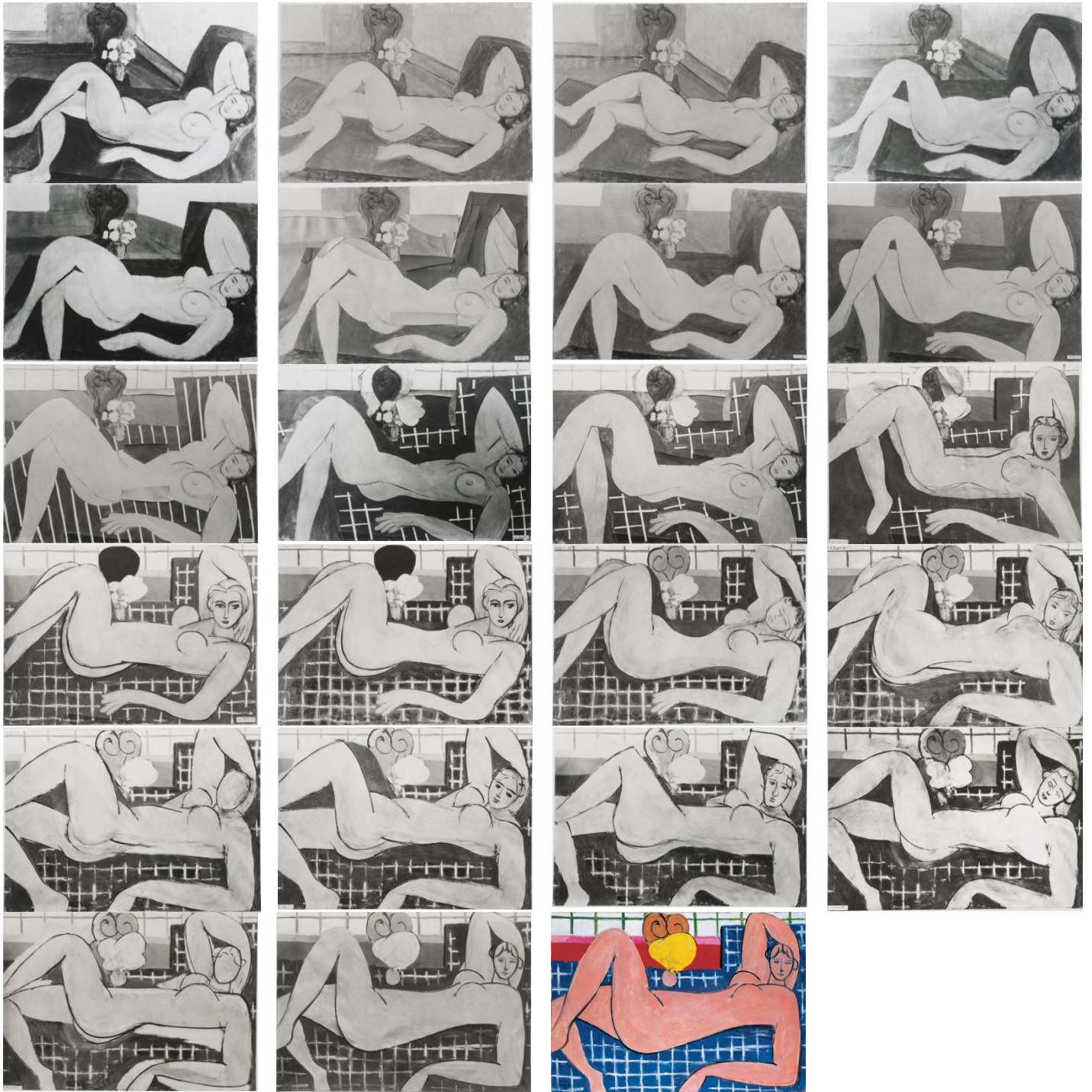


Figure 39 Henri Matisse (French, 1869-1954) *Photographic documentation of 22 progressive states of Large Reclining Nude, May 3, 1935 to October 30, 1935*

It was around 1931 when Brassai started to visit Matisse sequentially in his different homes; in his apartment in *Cours Saleya* in Nice, in that of *Boulevard de Montparnasse* and at the *Villa Alésia* in Paris, and at the *Villa Le Rêve* in Vence.

Brassai was especially interested in photographing the artist in the context of his different studios, which were full of works, objects, plants and birds.

He wrote in his book *The Artists of My life*: "Around 1931, the idea came to me to visit Matisse. He had been living in Nice for about twelve years at the foot of the old *château* by the *Quai des États-Unis* [...] But the painter was away on a voyage [...] It wasn't until a few years later that I made the acquaintance of Matisse himself, and this time it was in his Paris apartment at 132 *Rue du Montparnasse*, which had been transformed into a huge studio [...]"⁷⁹

In Matisse's Paris apartment/studio, Brassai finally had the chance to produce his first portraits of the artist whilst sculpting around his birds. (Figure 40) They appeared in the first issue of the art magazine *Verve* launched by the publisher Tériade: "That day, I took a series of photographs of these aviaries, which appeared in the first issue of the magazine *Verve*."⁸⁰

⁷⁹ Brassai, *The Artists of My Life*, Paris, éditions Denoël, 1982, p. 125

⁸⁰ Ibid.

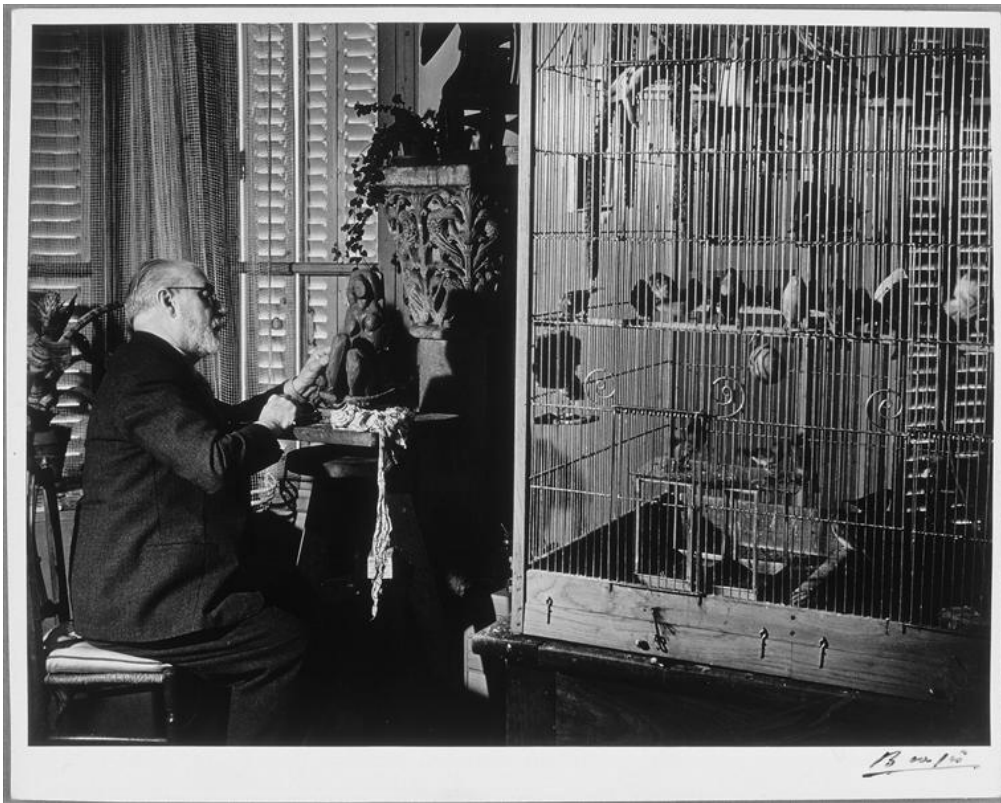


Figure 40 Brassai, *Matisse sculpting around his birds*, 1934 © ESTATE BRASSAI – RMN

In 1939, Matisse requested that Brassai take a series of nude photographs in his studio at *Villa Alésia* in Paris. (Figure 41) They met again in 1940 and 1945 in Paris then in spring 1946 in Vence: "At the *Villa Le Rêve*, in three years, Matisse had recreated his world of luxury, beauty and pleasure. He had brought from Régina the objects he loved to be surrounded by and which often appeared in his paintings [...]"⁸¹

In his book *The Artists of My Life*, published in 1982, Brassai wrote: "On the eve of the war, in early June 1939, I received a visit from a young woman bearing a message from Matisse. He wanted me to photograph him, with this model, who was posing for him. Since the end of May, despite the threat of war, Matisse had been working in Paris in a studio, which had been lent to him [...]. Deferring to his wish, I went to *Villa Alésia*. [...] In the light, bright studio, dressed in his white tunic, Matisse looked like a hospital "boss". [...] The canvas he was painting [...] had

⁸¹ Brassai, *The Artists of My Life*, Paris, éditions Denoël, 1982, p. 137

the title "Reader on a Black Background". [...] I took several photographs of Matisse with his model and the painting in progress, because I felt that it was interesting to see the motif and at the same time what it had become on the canvas. [...] A few weeks later, everything had changed. [...]"⁸²



Figure 41 Brassaï, Matisse drawing a nude, 1939 © ESTATE BRASSAÏ – RMN

The photos and comments noted in Brassaï's book published in 1982 provided illumination on how Matisse worked.

During that visit mentioned above, Brassaï started a series of photographs that he would call "Nudes in the Studio".

⁸² Brassaï, *The Artists of My Life*, Paris, éditions Denoël, 1982, p. 125 and 128.



Figure 42 Brassai, Matisse drawing a nude in his studio at la rue des Plantes, villa d'Alésia, Paris, 1939 © ESTATE BRASSAI – RMN

Observing Brassai's interest in the spirit of his work, Matisse made him try an experiment: "Here, Brassai, blindfold me and I will draw you a drawing mechanically, without thinking about it!" He went over to a dark colored door in the studio and on it he drew a head. [...] Enchanted with his work, Matisse asked me to photograph him in front of the drawing, which, alas, obviously no longer exists except in photographic form.⁸³

At the start of 1941, Matisse became very ill and he underwent a life-changing surgery for bowel cancer. The aftermath of the surgery left him unable to pursue his craft by standing at an easel and paint. So he devised in his own studio a special system where he could continue to make art, so he started cutting out pieces of paper which had been colored with gouache by his assistants and then he could pin them to a board. Brassai saw one of Matisse's first attempts at decoupage in Venice at the *Villa Le Rêve*.⁸⁴

Obviously Brassai and Matisse shared the same interest in objects: What I love, and that passionately, is to give to an everyday object a value, by

⁸³ 21 Ibid., p. 136.

⁸⁴ <http://www.musee-matisse-nice.org/anglais/expositions/Brassai.pdf>

the simple fact of discovering it, by the dignity given to it and by welcoming it in its intimacy.⁸⁵

For example, as Matisse was interested in the *Rocaille* armchair which he painted in 1942 and again in 1946, Brassai has photographed a metal chair from the *Jardin des Tuileries* in 1933. As described by Henry Miller in *The Eye of Paris* in 1933, he chose precisely this insignificant chair and, snapping it where he found it, unearthed what there was in it of dignity and veracity. *THIS IS A CHAIR*. [...] He transmitted to an insignificant phenomenon the fullness of his knowledge of life [...]⁸⁶



Figure 43 Henri Matisse, *The Rocaille Armchair*, 1946 (Musée Matisse, Nice)

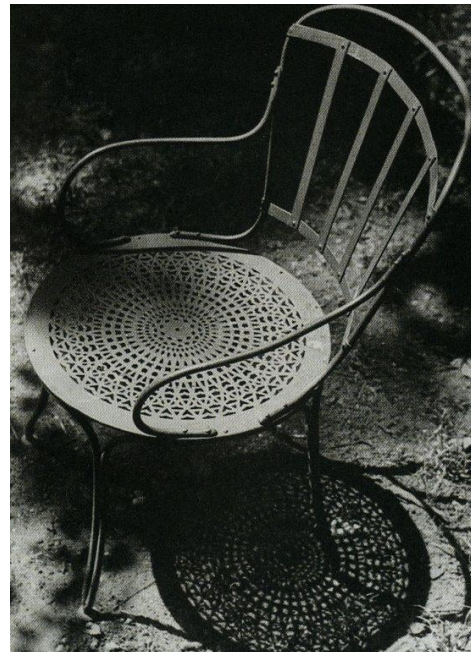


Figure 44 Brassai, *This is a chair*, 1933 © ESTATE BRASSAI – RMN

⁸⁵ Alain Sayag and Annick Lionel-Marie, *Brassai*, Paris, éditions Centre Pompidou/Seuil, 2000, p.171

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 174.

5.4. Rodin's *Porte de l'Enfer* (*The Gates of Hell*)



Figure 45 A copy of "The Gate of Hell" by Rodin is on permanent display at the Museum of Western Art in Ueno Park.

As so many artists of the 19th century admired and used photography in their work, a rapport between photography and sculpture very soon emerged. From the 1840s onwards pioneering photographers including Niépce, Daguerre, William Henry Fox Talbot and Hippolyte Bayard, found that the ornamental plaster or marble statuettes favored in middle-class homes made ideal photographic subjects. The documentary aspect of photography as well as its affinity with sculpture may explain Rodin's early interest in this new medium.

Rodin's concept of photography was in line with the prevailing views held in his time: photography's merit lay in its documentary precision, its ability to reproduce mechanically, faithfully and with neutrality, and not in any artistic capacity. Yet the photographic would soon become part of and then influence his creative process, although he apparently never used a camera himself.

As the medium that put his works into public circulation, photography also helped maintain his reputation as an artist.

In his *Gates of Hell*, as much as his interpretation of the themes of anguish, despair, and striving, the unity of *The Gates of Hell* is personal to this artist and an achievement never adequately credited. Rodin was categorized as the master of the fragment and not the whole.

Rodin assimilated and adapted the lexicon of hysterical postures for the figures that populate *The Gates of Hell*, he used the 'great malady of the century' to suggest the modern human condition and thereby created a new and potent sculptural idiom that we recognize today as idiosyncratic of Rodin – and distinctly modern.

The composition of *The Gates of Hell* is one of his greatest audacities. The fabric of the unity is deceptive and seemingly casual, yet in reality, it is calculated and complex: there is the conjoining axis, at once rectangular and cruciform, made by the overall architectural frame, and *The Thinker* atop the juncture of the doors and the lintel, which is played against by the figures, randomly dispersed. Elsewhere twenty years ago, just the overall figural arrangement was like the counterpoise of the Shades atop the portal. To complete the figural analogies, the portal's design has a spine running vertically through the center of the doors, *The Thinker*, and the central Shade. The figures were not arranged from a single viewpoint, but rather a roving perspective, as if one were free to view the work from a number of vantage points, including above the ground.

Arthur Marks said in his essay *David Wilkie's Portrait of his Parents* that Rodin's tendency to isolate and recombine key figures had produced drawn compositions that, for all their compression, were fragmented and additive when he turned to the non-contextual pose of the active model as his visual unit, this methodology produced the more obviously

disjunctive couplings and incoherent larger compositions that determine the visual and psychological qualities of the *Gates*.⁸⁷

Similarly, the physical background of the reliefs was made pliable to Rodin's thought and each motif attached to it. This ground could be hard or soft, rocklike or vaporous, topographical or abstract.

"Each of the double doors is divided into two panels, separated by a group that seems to form a knocker. Ugolino and his sons on the right, Paolo and Francesca da Rimini on the left.... Above these groups, Rodin has composed bas-reliefs from which figures and scenes detach themselves in varying degrees of relief. This gives his work extraordinary perspective. Each of the double doors is crowned with tragic masks, heads of furies, and the terrible or gracious allegories of sinful passions. Below each group, there are still more reliefs. Centaurs gallop along a river of mud, carrying off women who struggle. . . . Other centaurs fire arrows upon the unfortunate who try to escape; women and prostitutes who collapse as they are carried away can be seen falling head-first into the flaming mire."⁸⁸

Referring to the issue of originality discussed in chapter 7, it is noteworthy to mention Rosalind Krauss who argued in her Essay *The Originality of the Avant Garde* that in 1986, the National Gallery in Washington installed what it described as the largest Rodin exhibition ever. The exhibition included a brand new cast of *The Gates of Hell*, along with a movie showing its casting to the visitors.

If Rodin died in 1918, can a work of his, produced more than sixty years after his death be considered original?

The first bronze of *The Gates of Hell* was made in 1921, three years after the artist's death. The work he left at the time of his death stood incomplete in his studio, with all the pieces removed and scattered like

⁸⁷ Marks, Arthur S. 1974. "David Wilkie's Portraits of His Parents". *The Burlington Magazine* / Ed. Benedict Nicolson. 202-209.

⁸⁸ Quotation by Octave Mirbeau from the book of Ruth Butler: *Rodin in Perspective* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1980), 45 -46.

a puzzle on the floor. The pieces were afterwards arranged according to the numbers Rodin had penciled on the plasters and on the *Gates*. But as Rodin was working he used to change the numbers and play with the composition on the surface of the doors, meaning that he left us an unfinished and uncast version of the *Gates*.

When he died, he gave his entire estate to the French nation including the rights of its reproduction, which means the right of making bronze or marble versions of the plasters he had left. However, in accepting the gift, the *Chambre de Députés* decided to limit the posthumous editions to twelve casts of any of his plasters. Thus, the version in the national Gallery – says Krauss – is legitimate and original, in terms of law. But can it really be considered original?

Since there has been no completed example left by Rodin to be used as a guide in any new casting of Rodin's *Gates of Hell* to demonstrate his intentions about how the bronze piece was to look, we may consider that all casts of *The Gates of Hell* are examples of multiple copies of a nonexistent original. However, it seems that for Rodin, the concept of an "authentic bronze cast" did not play much of a role. He left many of his plaster figures unrealized neither in marble nor in bronze; he had a remote relation to the casting of his own work, as Krauss explained.

Rosalind Krauss added (referencing Benjamin) that "authenticity empties out as a notion as one approaches those mediums which are inherently multiple.", "From a photographic negative, one can make any number of prints; to ask for the "authentic" print makes no sense."⁸⁹

⁸⁹ Krauss, Rosalind E. *The Originality of the Avant-garde and Other Modernist Myths*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT, 1986, 1-41

6 ● Originality:

From approximately the middle of eighteenth century to the present time, “original” has generally been accepted as synonymous with “different”. As Rousseau once wrote: “If I am not better than other men, at least I am “different”.

Previous to Rousseau, the desire for celebrity was effectively restrained, with little exceptions by the necessity of achieving prominence through mastery of the difficult. If one wanted to be noticed, one had to do something better than others. The word “better” thereafter was substituted by the word “different” creating an elastic interpretation of “different”, and made the possibility of attaining prominence easier and available to all classes. This concept had contradicted Alexander the Great’s principle of “originality” which nature is a combination of two courses of actions open to the creative individual when faced by a difficulty: the first, to overcome obstacles by working within the accepted rules. And the second is to disregard the rules, or to bring on additional means.

Professor Francis A. Waterhouse gave two examples to these courses:

- The victories of *Arbella*, are an example of the first course (the solving of a problem by working within the rules). Alexander the Great won the battle by manipulation of the materials at hand without departing from the conventional rules of warfare.
- The second course of originality is celebrated in the incident of *Gordian Knot*, (the originality that breaks the rules, or uses additional means). In the incident, Alexander the Great could not untie the intricacies of the *Knot*, instead, he drew his sword and cut it. The solution represents the breaking of the rules with

additional means which found a ready acceptance from the people. Although the incident of *Gordian Knot* was very famous and was used as a metaphor whereby to describe any deed that is swiftly disrespectful of established complexities. Yet it had never been accepted as a law for everyday life prior to Rousseau. To the contrary, it was especially reserved to the rare souls with superior or extraordinary ability (Like Alexander the Great).⁹⁰

For two thousand years, the definition of originality was measured by the pattern that Alexander the Great had set. Moreover, even though some variations rose among later generations, the principle remained unchanged until it was swept tumultuously off the board in the eighteenth century. It was then followed, in a rushing succession, by the "Storm and Stress" period in Germany, the French Revolution, the Napoleonic military romanticism, the English, French and Spanish romantic schools of art and the later developments, Realism, Naturalism, Symbolism, Cubism, Futurism etc...

Rousseau's claim, thereafter, that "different" can be substituted in 90% of the cases for "better" has been proven by time to be untrue.⁹¹

Later in the nineteenth century, it was agreed on among theorists that the ideal is derived from the real. This ideal carried a double signification: it was both a general ideal created by artistic procedures and an ideal associated with the person who produced it. This complex signification of the ideal ensued that great artists were to be distinguished from lesser ones by the degree of correspondence of their "personal" and "general" ideal (the perfection). This is how we can see the classical position of originality, where it was interpreted as a coming first or doing first, some absolute priority.

A jump forward, the modern world adds its complex social order to these old considerations of history. The social and political powers of

⁹⁰ Waterhouse, Francis A. 1926. "Romantic 'Originality'". *The Sewanee Review*. 34, no. 1: 40-49 URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27533952>

⁹¹ Ibid.

modernity create the now familiar distinction between classicism and romanticism, with each perspective maintaining its particular sense of originality. The differences appear in challenging issues of class, social priorities and lineage, for example. Therefore, if artists use a medium or style that has been shaped and established by older generations, then perhaps originality would be corresponded as a participation in higher social class in which the status is transmitted by inheritance, and the artist becomes the legal inheritor of his older masters' techniques. However, he or she would still play the role of the creator, preserving the values of the first creation. This is the essence of the classical originality.

Additionally, Richard Shiff argued that classicism could only be seen as a form of idealization of its real-life models, rather than being as it was for itself, a form of true standardization of reality. And he continues: as we lose touch with classicism's "realism", we likewise lose our connection to the naturalness of the workings of its system of transmission, from one master to another.⁹² Moreover, he maintained that originality is a concept that emerges in conscious dialogue with the discourses and practices of neo-classicism.

For Rosalind Krauss, the concept of originality is considered as an anxious response to technologies of reproduction such as photography and to the de-centering of origins.⁹³

In the romantic position, originality is manifested when one alters existing directions or forces. This is when the artist becomes not the carrier of tradition but its deviator. This is very much opposing the classical scheme.

⁹² Shiff, Richard. *Phototropism (Figure the Proper)*, in *Retaining the Original: Multiple Originals, Copies, and Reproductions*, ed. Kathleen Preciado, Washington: National Gallery of Art, 1989, p.161-179

⁹³ Krauss, Rosalind E. *Retaining the Original? The State of the Question*, in *Retaining the Original: Multiple Originals, Copies, and Reproductions*, ed. Kathleen Preciado, Washington: National

6.1. Representation:

In its ideal formulation, representation is understood as recognizable likeness of something real, but at the same time, something which cannot replace it. Three fundamental units can be observed: The image, the object that it reflects (the model) and the viewer. From those three units the proclamation has developed that an artwork cannot be accepted as representational unless both the viewer and the object (real) are isolated from and situated as external to the work. This proclamation still holds a place in histories of visual cultures.

Barthes observes: "representation is not defined directly by imitation: even if one gets rid of notions of the "real", of the "vraisemblable", of the "copy", there will be representation for so long as a subject (author, reader, spectator or voyeur) casts his gaze towards a horizon on which he cuts out the base of a triangle, his eye (or his mind) forming the apex". He continues: "The *Organon of Representation* (which it is today becoming possible to write because there are intimations of something else) will have as its dual foundation the act of cutting out *découpage* and the unity of the subject in that action".⁹⁴

Barthes indicated a practice that calculates the place of things as they are observed; if the artwork is set here, the observer will see it, if it is put elsewhere, he or she will not. We can therefore take advantage of the masking effect that has been produced and play on the illusion it provides.

Representation in this context refers to the act of depiction, both (iconic) figuration and (symbolic) configuration. And it is not the same as representation which is some second presentation of the original.

Taking as an example: two different paintings, both representing an artist engaging in painting an artist who is painting his model. Ingres' *Raphael and La Fornarina* (Figure 46), and Matisse' *The Painter and His*

⁹⁴Barthes, Roland. *Diderot, Brecht, Einstein, Screen*, vol. 15, no. 2, 1974, p.33

Model (Figure 47). In both pictures, the model who is being represented is a woman, and as long as this model is observable, one may speak of her representation in a relatively unproblematic way. However, it is another kind of obstacle when she is represented through another representation (another painting).

In both paintings, the pictorial representation of the model does not show an uttermost resemblance. This is resulted from the imaginative transference and technical transformation as the model was shifted from an external world to its place in the picture. But if the model was not a person, still-life, landscape but “a picture” of one of these elements, the representation therefore would likely resemble the original closely and sometimes even exactly. Especially when both the original and its representation are achieved by similar technical procedures. This attempt can be described as an act of “copying”. Additionally, if the author of the original is not the same person who created the copy, then the original and the copy might differ.

Rosalind Krauss and Richard Shiff had opposite opinions reading Ingres' *Raphael and La Fornarina* (Figure 46), this painting depicts Raphael seated before a portrait of a woman he has just finished while clasping "the real" woman in his arms.



Figure 46 Ingres, Jean Auguste Dominique. *Raphael and the Fornarina*. 1814. Oil on canvas. Fogg Art Museum, Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA.

Even if Ingres tried to adopt Raphael's style in this painting, it was obvious that it was infiltrated by Ingres' own style. To Rosalind Krauss, it is like a silent agreement between the two artists that both styles originate in Raphael as the author of their production and admit that Raphael is a powerful origin to Ingres' art. While for Richard Shiff, the relation between the original and the copy is unproblematic within classicism and that when Ingres enters into Raphael's Style, he demonstrates the naturalness of this connection, because they lived within a tradition in which these priorities lose their rigidity, and he added that Ingres or Raphael in imitating were always themselves. As a

result, for Shiff, the system of authorship remains unaffected by the multiple, while for Krauss, it is seen to be breached from within by the appearance of the author-effect.

Ingres lived in a difficult historical period and steered the middle course between the classical idealism and the romantic realism. His *Raphael and the Fornarina* presents a great example of the confluence of the real and the ideal; for it refers to the details of the everyday life and visions of its dual subject (the life of Raphael and the life of Ingres) and clearly creates that subject through an academic traditional representation obvious in the resemblance between the depicted model and the depicted painting of the model).

On the other hand, Matisse's *The Painter and His Model* (Figure 47) depicts an artist along with both his model and her representation. The model and the painting of the model show an exceptional resemblance. They share the same style despite the fact that one is volumetric and the other is a flat depiction. A comparison with Ingres' *Raphael and the Fornarina* cannot be made here, because of the lack of the sense of reality; the figures do not look like traditional representations of the real. The model, her representation and the depicted painter are faceless abstractions. Matisse's distinct style marks the painting on the easel; the painting represents a symbolic reference to the artist's self-expression (like a self-portrait). The same would not hold in the case of Ingres' painting; for although it exhibits Ingres' style, it both directly and indirectly portrays Raphael; it clearly positions Raphael as well as Ingres as the origin. "*Raphael and the Fornarina* may represent Ingres' vision and Raphael's vision, but it also signifies (external) "reality". "⁹⁵

⁹⁵ Shiff, Richard. "Representation, Copying, and the Technique of Originality." *New Literary History* 15, no. 2, Interrelation of Interpretation and Creation, 1984: p.345



Figure 47 Matisse, Henri. *Le Peintre Dans Son Atelier* (*The Painter and His Model*). 1916-17. Oil on canvas. Musée National D'Art Moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris.

6.2. Imitation:

It is necessary to point at an important lexical practice distinguishing between the act of imitation and the act of copying. It is a legacy of critics in the nineteenth century, who might have been the first to confuse the two notions. For example, the academic theorist Quatremère de Quincy offered an interesting definition saying: To

imitate in the fine arts, is to produce the resemblance of a thing, but in another thing which becomes the image of it... in other words, according to Quincy, imitations should aim at being “different” from, not identical to, their originals. This draws the difference between imitation and copy, between the artistic representation and the mechanical reproduction.”⁹⁶

Considering this argument, we deduce on one hand that imitation requires a certain originality of its own because it was an interpretative act that created a certain degree of difference between the original model and its representation. On the other hand, copying can be considered as an attempt of mechanical replication. Both procedures amount to the creation of a form similar to that of the original model but not identical to it.

6.3. Appropriation:

The practices of copying, imitating, plagiarism, borrowing and reproduction have been central for as long as the arts have existed; no artist starts from scratch. In the late twentieth century, these practices gained a more prestigious and more flexible name “appropriation”.

Briefly, appropriation refers to the conscious use of material that derives from outside the work.⁹⁷ Whether directly or indirectly, every artist derives materials from the past. I would like to make reference to one example: *The body of Nefertiti*, a project of *Little Warsaw* the collective name for artists András Gálik and Bálint Havas. (Figure 48)

⁹⁶ De Quincy, Quatremère. *Essai Sur La Nature, Le but Et Les Moyens De L'imitation Dans Les Beaux-arts*. London: Adamant Media Corporation, 2003.

⁹⁷ Buskirk, Martha. "Appropriation Under the Gun." *Art in America* 80 (1992): 37-40.

In 2003, they used the concepts of appropriation and re-contextualization of *Nefertiti's* bust, transforming it from an isolated



Figure 48 Little Warsaw | András Gálik and Bálint Havas, *The Body of Nefertiti*, 2003 - Life-size bronze with the limestone bust of Nefertiti (1340 B.C.) - May 26, 2003, Ägyptisches Museum und Papyrussammlung, Berlin-Charlottenburg.

icon to an integral part of a new work of art. This provided a chance for the bust to convey new meanings four thousand years after Thutmose created it.

In many cultures, an authentic artist is considered one who is able to represent traditional forms in their utmost perfection. For instance, the artists I argued about in some chapters of my research have reputations that are largely based on the belief that these are remarkably original, ahead of their time, that they originated entire

cultural movements and most importantly, their art was unprecedented.

Associated with the postmodernist artistic and cultural movement, appropriation was embraced by postmodernist artists who attempted a systematic subversion of the notion originality.

7 ● Conclusions:

It has been the objective of this research to establish a clearer understanding of the relationship between art and technology and to review its impact on the valuation and reaction expected from the observer towards the artwork.

A theoretical investigation was adopted in researching the relationship between the viewer and the viewed. This includes a study of the relationship of vision to touch in the nineteenth century and elements of execution and production of paintings including the discovery of linear perspective, and the camera obscura since the early renaissance.

In chapter 5, I undertook to describe and analyze the reception of the emergence of photography and provided examples of artists who were keen in uncovering new techniques.

In my practical part, I examined the different models of seeing. This enabled the identification of the cultural and historical variables that influence and determine visual culture. I also defined the differences between the observer and the spectator.

In addition, I discussed originality, representation, imitation vs. copies and appropriation, and their definitions, throughout history and today.

To conclude:

The principle of individuation (*principium individuationis*) refers to our relative perception of the world, which is often created through changing contextual relationships. We engage in judging the aspects

that we observe by comparing them to other aspects. An object is small because another is bigger; the light of a lamp is dim in the sun but bright in the dark. This principle was demolished by modern technology that challenged individual abilities by giving access to collective powers of greater importance. This theoretical position makes an important contribution to our understanding of the classical concept of originality that was reserved only for the rare souls of superior and extraordinary abilities.

With the emergence of photography (Daguerreotype), Paul Delaroche spoke of the inauguration event of the death of painting; he basically did not mean painting in general but rather his particular style of painting, which was dominant in France for about fifty years. The neoclassical academic style that produced paintings so finely finished that no trace of the brush could be seen. This style was probably inspired by the camera obscura in the first place. It is just as oil painting in the fifteenth century had prevailed over wood panels for its ease of mobility and greater truth of imitation, so had painting now been superseded by photography. This was the death of painting observed by Delaroche. (An introduction to visual culture p. 68) In this manner, the classical concept of originality suffered consequently from this innovation.

Now, if we speak of an original contemporary work of art, we find ourselves facing a certain dubiety. This is due to what technology brought to our world in terms of appropriation or imitation, challenging the classical model of values that used to glorify a unique one and only piece of art. However, if it comes to an appropriated contemporary artwork, we unconsciously might value the original work a bit more than the new, although at the same time we could be able to better understand the new. In this way, originality becomes a relative notion, changing with time, but remains a foundational yet unstable, notion.

It is important to note however, that artists are in constant search of new forms of expression in order to find new perception of the world

that would give them new or different perspectives. Indeed, new technology helped them through their search and offered them a wide spectrum of options facilitating their modes of expression. Through my research, I conclude that new technologies cannot affect art; however, they can only help in the process of its creation.

In short, if we try to define what art is, we find that in classical antiquity, the word "art" (Greek, *tekhnè*; Latin, *ars*) was the name given to any activity governed by rules; art was that which could be taught, and as such did not include activities governed by instinct or intuition. The arts were divided into "mechanical arts" and "liberal arts" the latter now specified in terms of the *trivium* (grammar, logic, rhetoric), and *quadrivium* (arithmetic, astronomy, geometry, music), these liberal arts formed part of the medieval university curriculum; the teaching of painting and sculpture was undertaken in the artisans' guilds. When in the early renaissance painting became elevated to the rank of liberal art, it was as a result of the argument that painting had ceased to be simply a manual skill and had become, de facto, a learned occupation. The emergence of experimental science in the second half of the seventeenth century created another division in the field of arts which corresponds roughly to the modern distribution of arts. In 1747 Charles Batteux listed in his book, *Les beaux arts réduits à un même principe*, seven "fine arts": architecture, dance, music, oratory, painting, poetry and sculpture. Batteux's appellation "fine arts" has survived into the present. Later on, two of the seven beaux arts: oratory and poetry became grouped separately as *belles lettres*. And in the nineteenth century, dance and music were also separated to leave only three visual arts: architecture, painting, and sculpture to enjoy the title fine arts. Today the capitalized word Art refers to those three domains and to become more exclusive, it is now common to say "Art and Architecture".⁹⁸ These categories continue to grow and change to include photography and media-art etc... Art in Oxford dictionary is defined as the expression or application of human creative skill and

⁹⁸ Burgin, Victor. *The End of Art Theory: Criticism and Post-Modernity*. Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press International, 1986.

imagination, typically in a visual form such as painting or sculpture, producing works to be appreciated primarily for their beauty or emotional power.

Subsequently, like many others, I see that Art is a creative form, which communicates one's ideas, engages one emotionally and intellectually and have the ability to provoke and to give new and different perspectives to the world. The question whether technology affects arts positively or negatively finds an answer here. Technology cannot affect Art; however, it helps artists convert their ideas, engage on an emotional level and gives them innovative sophisticated tools of expression.

Furthermore, technology has itself evolved into a medium of art – it is merely considered as another set of tools in addition to the paintbrush and the canvas. These “extra tools” can support and supplement more traditional means of art in new ways. Digital versions of images for instance can introduce people to new forms while still providing a glimpse of the original. Thus, observing a digital version of any painting on a computer or any other screen, may arise a desire to go see the piece in real life.

Given the advantages of technology outlined in the previous paragraph, it is quite predictable that technology is also strengthening and extending embedded forms of appropriation in Art. Its emergence has in fact created an extended moment of transition and re-evaluation of contexts that should be reconsidered, and re-imagined by artists and art-theorists.

In the eighties, when digital art was still in its beginning, some theorists were critical about the fact that it is a medium that cannot be taught academically, and they gave in to the fact that it was difficult to set any boundaries to its development. In fact, technologies tend to develop faster than the rhetoric of evaluating them. The field has become rich and diverse, comprised of engaging digital and real objects, as well as actions, interactions, and interventions; some of these aspects I used in my two exhibitions as well because it was fascinating for me to use

technology as a tool and a medium at the same time and to observe the interactive part of the exhibitions.

Accordingly, in the practical part of my research, precisely in my *Moi et l'Autre* installation, I created a pattern out of a photograph to give an overall effect that from a distance of about 4 meters, when viewed with the naked eye, the work would appear as blurry abstract ornamentation. Nevertheless, when seen from a shorter distance, it becomes understandable. In this way, the work itself is matching the process of human vision, not only rendering the invisible workings of the retina and brain visible, but also more importantly showing that when the subject stands at a distance from the unclear picture it becomes recognizable.

I also, attempted by using this ornamentation to remind the viewer that the process of seeing is an active and complicated one in which the observer is required to participate in the formation and coherence of what is seen.

Moreover, this very simple operation contradicts the concept of cartesian perspectivalism which suggested that matter and thought operate independently, the rational observer is a stable subject who is able to know, fully understand and control the world through the denial of the bodily senses that could therefore be restrained by reason.

Considering the relationship between the viewer and the viewed as a transaction in which both terms are equally compromised; it is necessary to describe a visuality in which the viewer positively participates.

Even though viewers obviously see artworks, this seeing does not need to be regarded as an act of separation from objects. Instead, the simple experiment in my work demands nearness in an intermixed field, undermining therefore, the notion of psychological detachment between subject and object, ceasing Cartesianism and building an effective strategy to renegotiate the relationship between the viewer

and the viewed. The work requires not only the participation of the viewers, but also the merging of observer and observed.

On the other hand, when I exhibited sketches that I made with the aid of the camera obscura, my attempt was to analyze the accuracy of the device and to experiment with whether it will give the degree of exactitude I needed or not. The results were by some means negative, due probably to the lightweight of the device I used or to its uneasy handling. The lines of the sketches did not entirely match the reflected images of the camera. To put this into experiment, I invited the visitors of the exhibition to try the camera obscura themselves. The reactions were rather positive and offered a better understanding of the sketches shown. In short, when the viewer participated by taking action, he or she arrived at the knowledge and understanding of the work not only through the sense of sight but also through the sense of touch. Thus, seeing should not be considered as an absolute experience, which if analyzed on its own – with the exclusion of the other senses of the body – does not allow for an adequate understanding of how meanings are produced.

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Online Resources

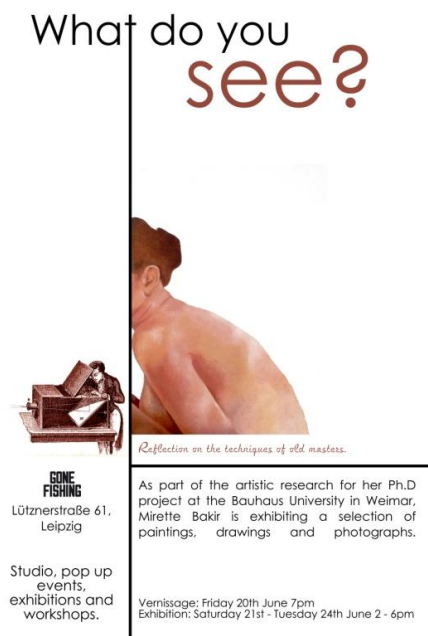
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Part 2 (Practical Work)

First Exhibition...

WHAT DO YOU SEE?

*[Exhibition held on 20 June 2014
in Gallery Gone Fishing in Leipzig
for the purpose of my Ph.D.
research]*



Studying the camera obscura gave me a great inspiration and made me feel that I had found my own place. That little box that contains the whole world in it, but reflects only parts of it.

I travelled back and forth between reality and its reflection and I questioned the

different perspectives, observations, and the multiple levels of human vision.

For the purpose of my study and my fascination, I focused on the camera obscura and other modern optical devices such as a projector, a digital camera, and a personal computer equipped with different graphic applications in my exhibition.

My intention was not to offer a comprehensive history of the development of technology and its impact on art, but rather to examine how it was used and how it was received. And, based on this examination, to argue for a conception of visual culture as, necessarily, a transaction between an active viewer and the viewed. As well as to pinpoint the crucial difference between human perception and mechanic vision.

The exhibition consisted of two parts, the first part was the show of the paintings and drawings made with the aid of the above-mentioned devices,

and the second part was a workshop in which the visitors participated by using the exhibited camera obscura to create sketches and to discover its abilities. Thus, I have included a brief description of the camera obscura in the next paragraph.

The camera obscura

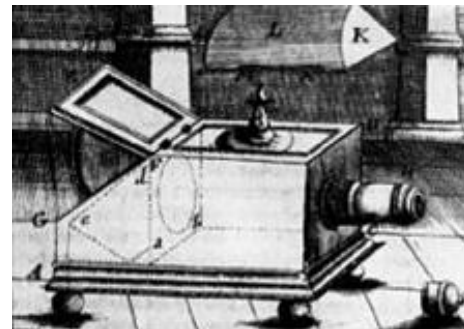
Observed by Chinese philosophers and Aristotle as early as 470 BC, camera obscuras are darkened rooms with single pinholes pierced or drilled into one wall. Much like light entering our eyes to project an upside-down image of what we see into our brain, the scene outside will stream in through the pinhole and be projected onto the opposite wall, upside-down, and in real-time.

The purpose of the camera obscura was to aid in the drawing of an image, and the principle is the same regardless of the model:

- The subject to be drawn is placed between the camera obscura and a light source.
- Directed at the subject and light source is a pinhole in the box that bends incoming light

rays so that they converge on a precisely located focal plane.

- A screen reflects the resulting image of the subject onto a flat surface.
- The artist then traces the image on paper placed on the surface.



Based on a simple optical principle, the camera obscura boasts all the elements of the photographic camera—except, film. As you might expect, it works well only in direct sunlight: reflected light casts a dimmer image of the subject, and if the artist tries to improve illumination by enlarging the hole (or aperture), the incoming light is diffused, allowing overlapping rays of light to enter. Eventually, a convex lens was placed just behind the aperture to bend the rays and make them converge on an appropriately placed focal plane behind the lens. A mirror, therefore, was added to turn the

image right side up, prefiguring the reflex system of the modern photographic camera. When the diaphragm was invented the aperture became adjustable: by opening or closing the diaphragm and moving the focal plane forward or backward, the operator could control the focus of any image cast on the focal plane (usually a piece of paper on which to trace the image).

In my exhibition "What Do You See?" the visitors were invited to try the camera obscura and explore its options to create simple sketches of a represented "copy" of one of Vermeer's paintings which had been placed in front of the camera. I chose Vermeer's *Music Lesson* (Below) because it



is one of the paintings that helped to raise the speculations about Vermeer's possible use of

the camera obscura as first argued by Philip Steadman. And because it contains the sort of perspective that would help the participants to better understand the functions of the device.

The issues of representation, imitation, appropriation were all present in the exhibition as follows: the three following paintings were manifested and, to a certain degree, manipulated with computer. But the fourth was purely created in "the classical sense" directly from a live-model.

"From today painting is dead!" That is what the painter Paul Delaroche exclaimed at the official launch of the Daguerreotype at the institute de France on 19 August 1839. In a most fundamental sense, Delaroche was possibly right. We can see from the course of history, that the central role of picturing reality has passed from the old manual skills of painting to the most recent and sophisticated technologies.

In painting number **Error! Reference source not found.**, I first used a digital camera to take a picture of the model, transferred the photo onto

computer, adjusted the background and the lighting, then transferred it again via projection and traced its outlines onto the canvas; afterwards I started to put my pigments and painted it.

I can imagine that what I have described above would be a great deception to Delaroche if he were to read it.

However, in my opinion, new technologies have definitely helped artists through the path of time.

In painting number 2, I used a kindergarten photo taken in the 80s. I just doctored the picture and shifted it onto canvas.

Painting number 3 was handled in a similar way as painting number **Error! Reference source not found.** but the entire background was invented to create a floating effect.

Painting number 4 depicts a live model (modèle vivant) and it was not manipulated by any device.

1









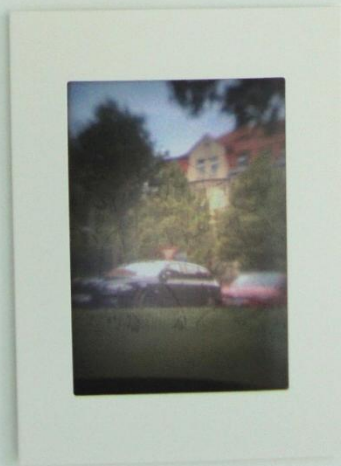
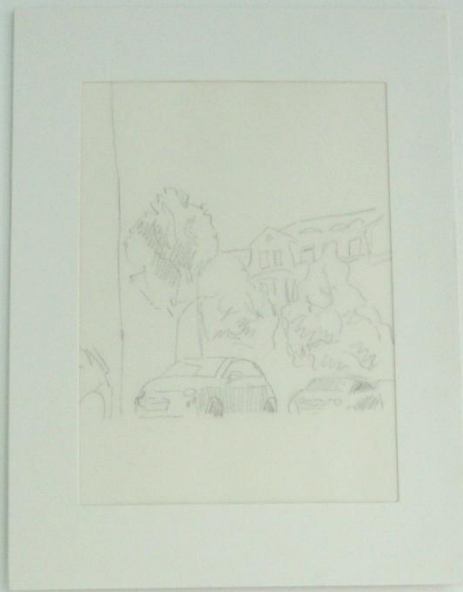
Along with the paintings, I exhibited some sketches done with the aid of the box camera obscura to demonstrate the characteristics of the resulting drawings and to measure their quality; I displayed the camera's view (Digital photo of the surface of the camera obscura) together with the sketches I made.













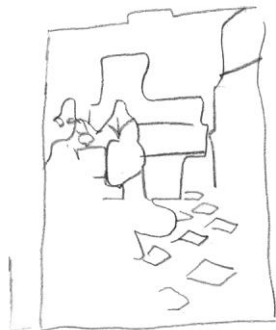




Next, I am adding some sketches of the interacting part of the exhibition, when the visitors participated to discover the camera obscura.

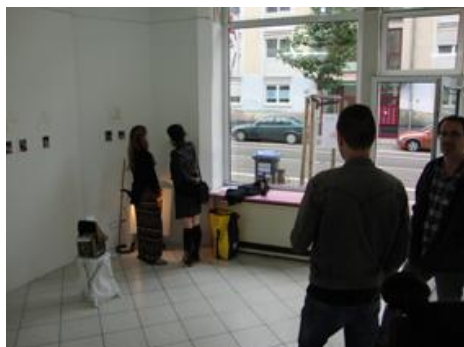
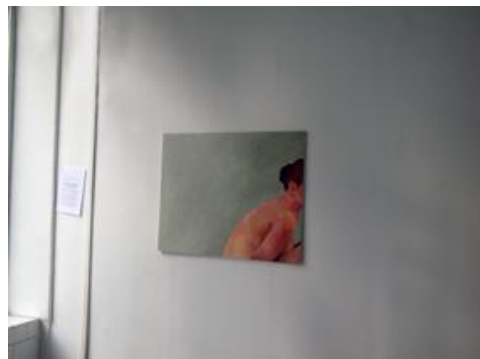
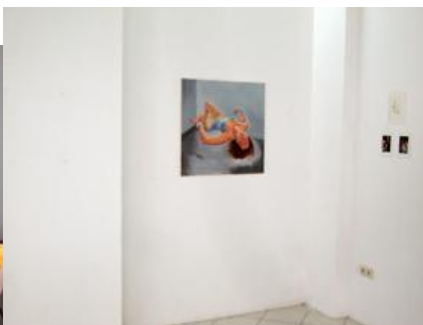


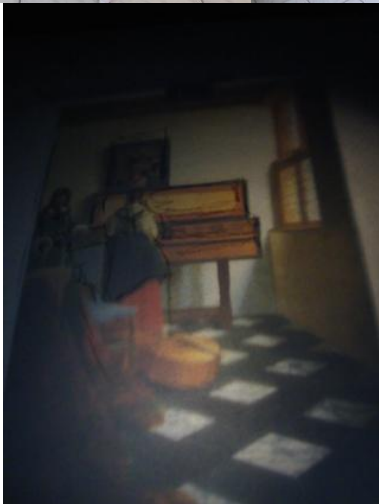
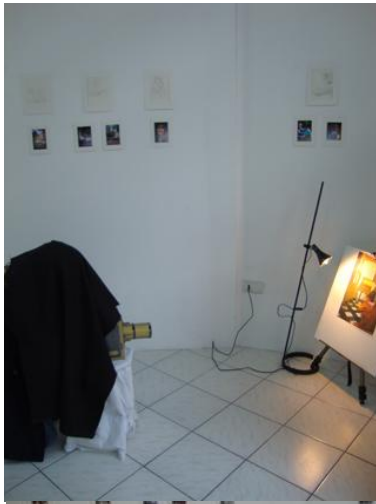


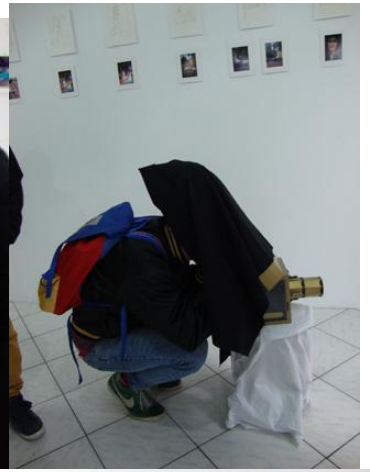




HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE EXHIBITION







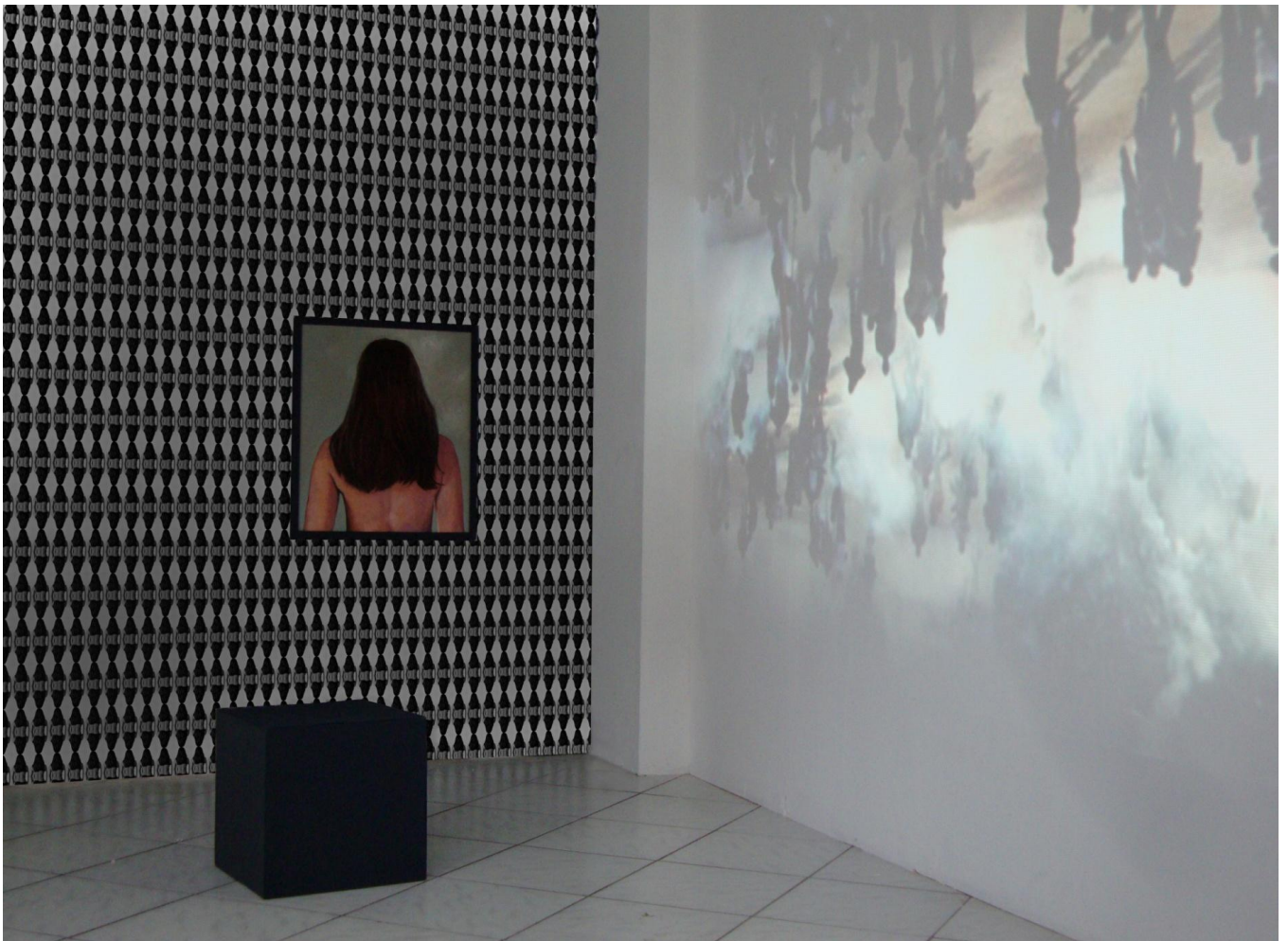
Second Exhibition...

MOI ET L'AUTRE

[An Installation held in August 2014 in Gallery Gone Fishing in Leipzig as a part of my Ph.D. research]

In my work, I have attempted to build a discourse, in one way or another, between the painting and the projected image– with the possibility to infringe the boundary of the digital image frame – to allow the image to physically burst out towards the observer, or allow the observer to virtually enter the image.

We are standing on a platform of a room facing one corner. Directly in front of us is a black cube laying on the ground, an upside-down image projected on one wall, and ornamentation with a framed painting hanged on the other wall.



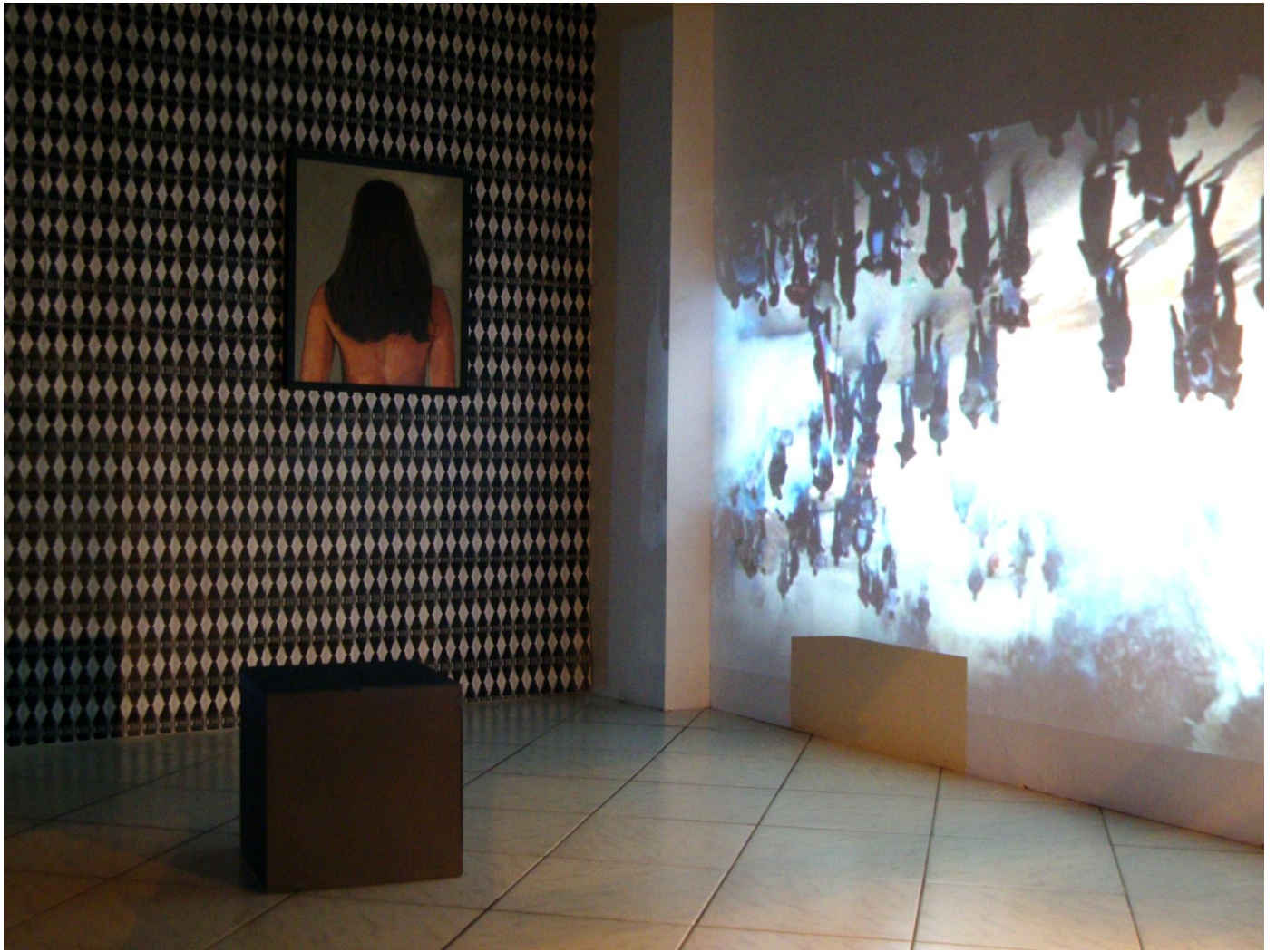


Figure 49

I worked on this installation on different levels, which are represented as follows:

The first level: The camera obscura (The black cube)

The second level: Me in the painting and the pattern

The third level: The other (the projected image)

The fourth level: The observer

The Installations consists of 4 elements.

1. The ornamentation (Figure 50)

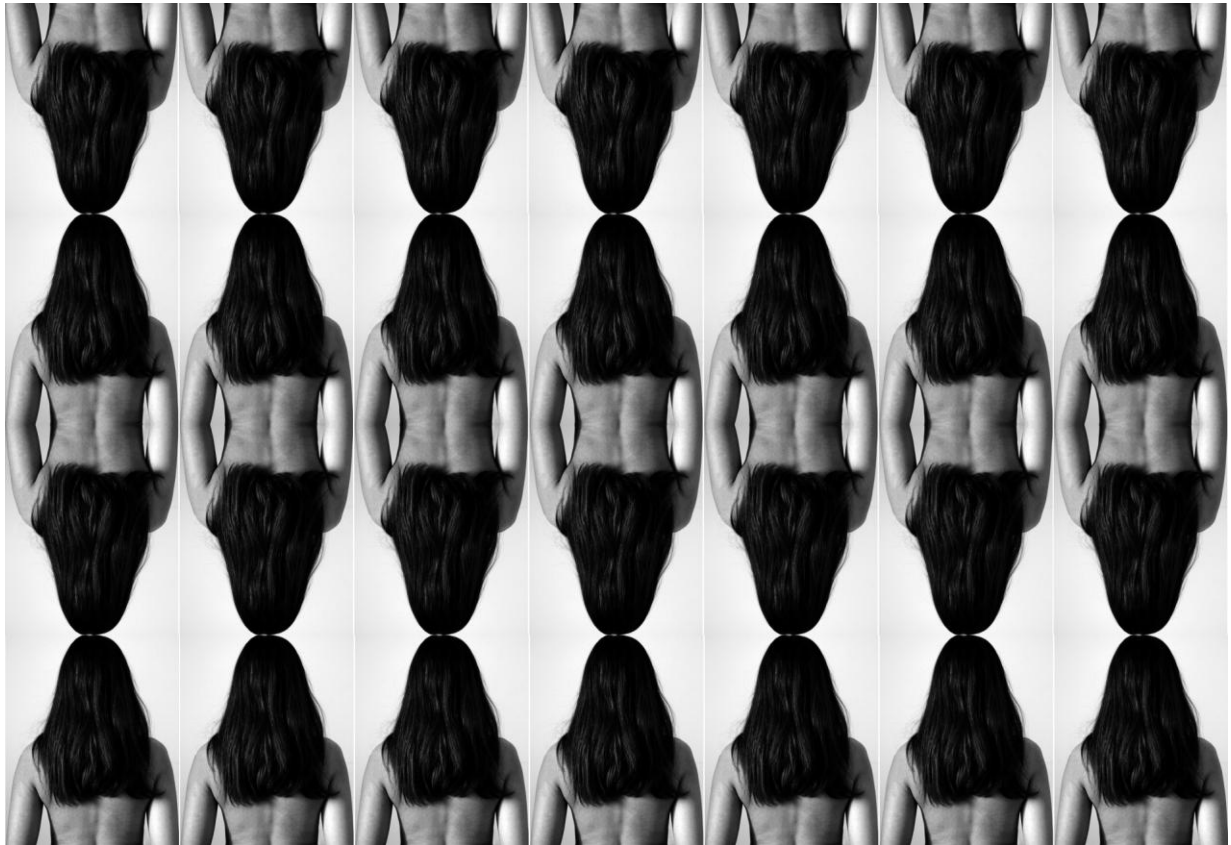


Figure 50

Due to the fact that I grew up within a culture in which ornamentation was invented and where it has played an important role in daily life up until now, it has a huge impact on me and represents a significant aspect of my identity.

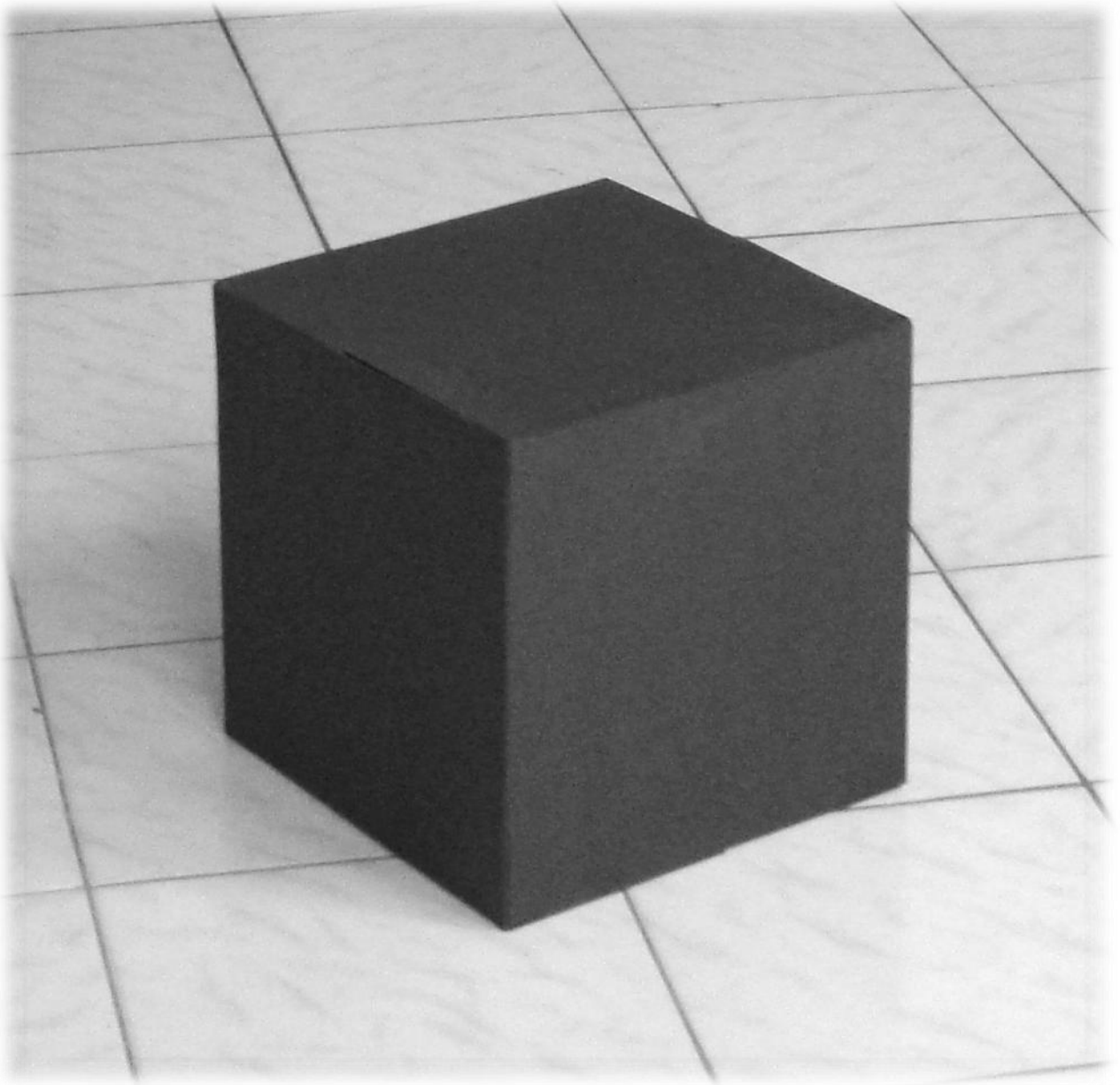
I used the ornamentation element in my installation because I consider it as a visual language that is attempting to define a system of models that takes into consideration the order of the universe toward which diverse disciplines converge. It reflects the specificity of a very sophisticated, systemized and organized culture. This visual language is structured out of abstract, refined and fragile units that compose all together a very strong entity. Every unit in this entity is indispensable, which means that if we remove only one unit, the whole systems will collapse.

I find pertinent similarities between this system of models and “women” in the Middle Eastern culture and this is why I have used myself as a model in the installation. Firstly, to represent myself as a female, secondly, to reflect the idea of being the subject and the object at the same time and thirdly, to embody an imaginative transference and technical transformation when “me” (the model) was shifted from the external world and placed into the artwork.

2. The Painting:



3. The Black Cube:



I deployed the black cube to hint at religion and at the same time make an allusion to the camera obscura.

4. The projected image:

The image is projected upside down to refer to the product of the camera obscura.

Description:

The camera obscura model of vision (model of a centered, ideal, disembodied vision that reigned in the 16th and 17th century) had guaranteed access to an objective truth about the world. But such access to truth depended on a detached subject whose sensory experiences are subordinated to an external, pre given world of objective truth. Jonathan Crary argued that this model collapsed in the nineteenth century for one reason - the insertion of a new term into discourses and practices of vision: the human body. A term whose exclusion was foundational to classical theories of vision and optics. A new modernity of vision was thus built and a new kind of observer with a new carnal density in place of the invisible, disembodied spectator of the camera obscura.



To argue these concepts, I was interested in inserting the projection of the camera obscura into an installation that required an active observer in order to find a meaning. A task, which corresponds better with later models of vision.

In order to allude to the effect of the camera obscura in the installation, I projected upside down photographs of some events that I consider crucial to me in high definition.

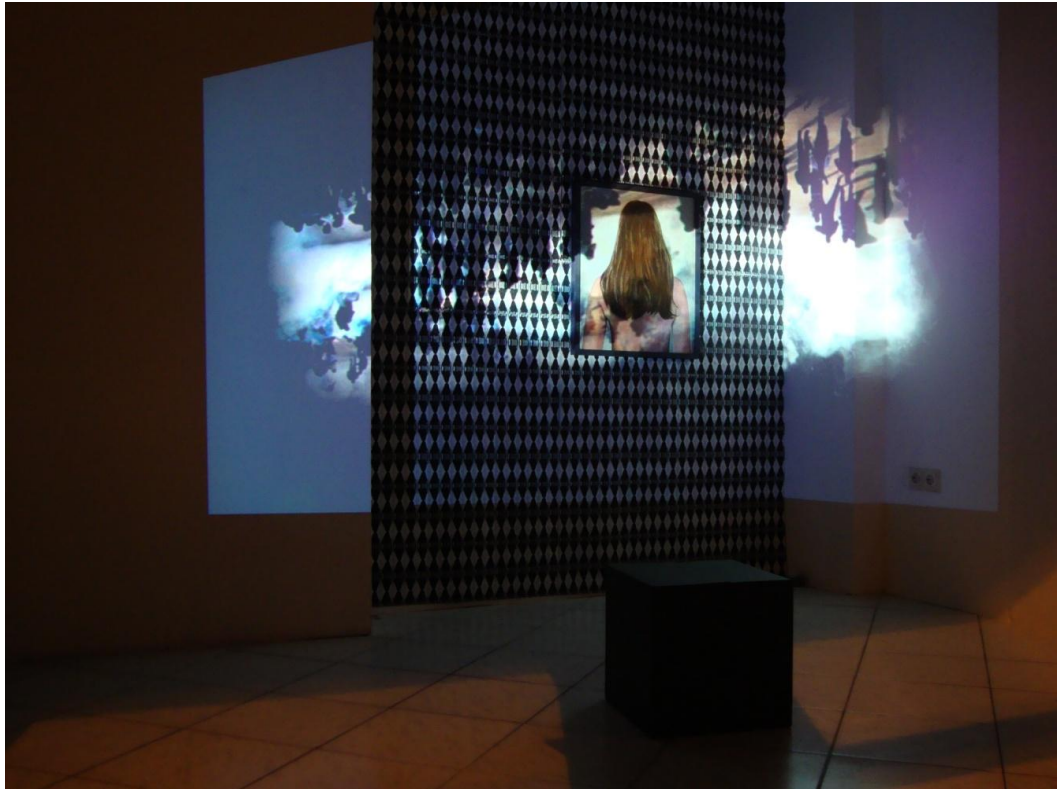
To understand the whole work, the observer has to interact by moving inside and around the installation, in order to understand every element separately then combine them all together.

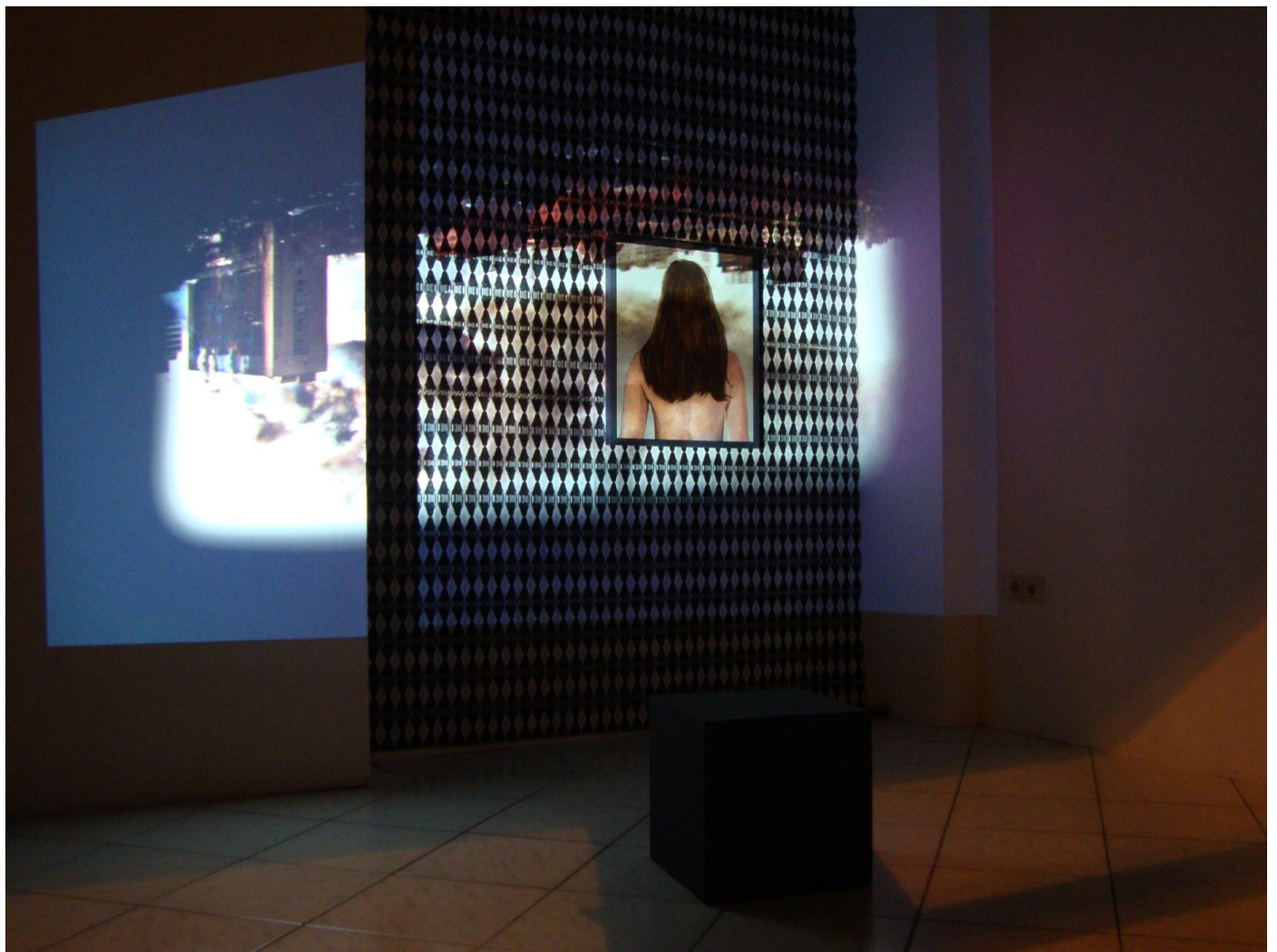
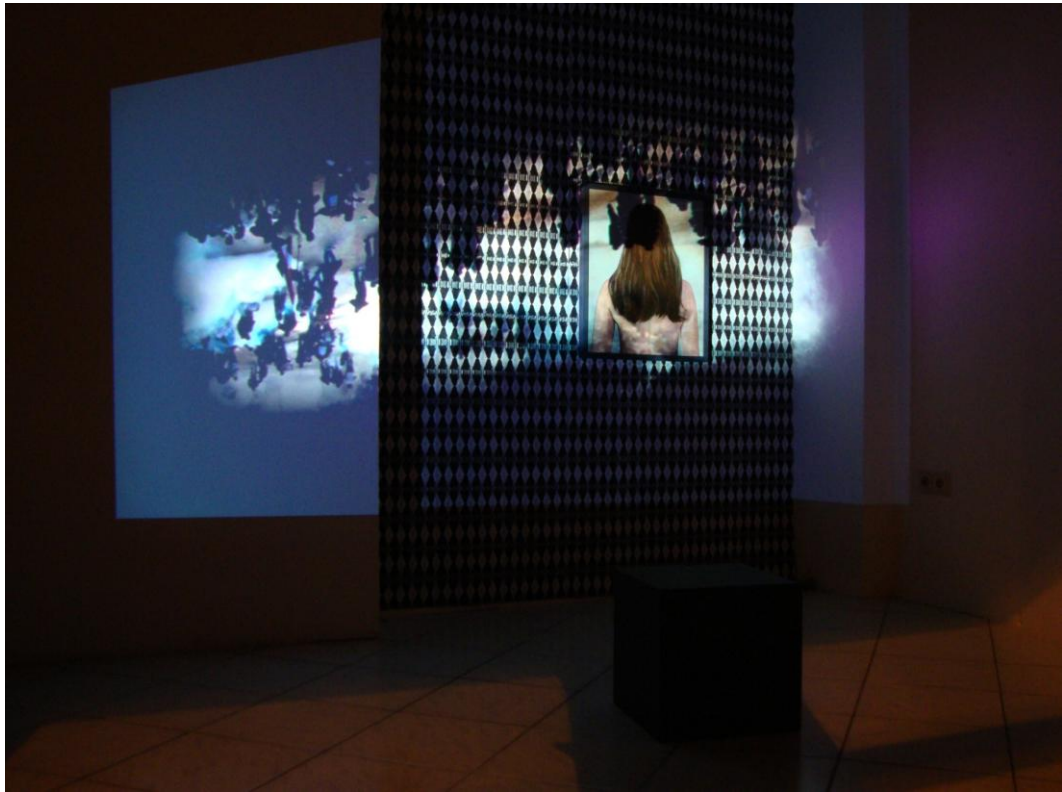
HIGHLIGHTS













Zusammenfassung

Inhaltliche Struktur:

Theoretischer Teil: Um Kulturtechniken des künstlerischen Ausdruckes, und damit den Bezug zwischen Kunst und Medientechnologie zu ergründen, wurde das Verhältnis zwischen dem Betrachter und dem Betrachteten erforscht. Begriffe wie Originalität, Repräsentation, Imitation sowie Aneignung und Rezeption kommen an historischen Beispielen zur Diskussion.

Praktischer Teil: Mit zwei Ausstellungen (Malerei, Installation) wurden verschiedene Modelle des Sehens problematisiert, um kulturelle und historische Variablen zu ermitteln, die visuelle Kultur begründen. Außerdem wurden die Unterschiede zwischen Beobachter und Betrachter/Zuschauer in Ausstellungssituationen hinterfragt.

Kurzfassung:

Medientechnologie hat sich selbst zu einer Kunstform entwickelt. Sie kann Künstler dabei unterstützen, ihre Ideen handwerklich umzusetzen (Beispiel: Camera Obscura) und zu reflektieren. Dabei geht es um mehr als um technische Hilfsmittel für den künstlerischen Ausdruck. Wird die Beziehung zwischen Betrachter und Betrachtetem als eine Transaktion gesehen, in der beide Begriffe gleichermaßen aufs Spiel gesetzt werden, dann ist es notwendig eine Visualität zu bestimmen, an der der Betrachter (im Sinne von Jonathan Crary) aktiv teilnimmt. Das Sehen darf nicht als absolute Erfahrung verstanden werden, denn einzeln analysiert – ohne Einbeziehung anderer Sinneswahrnehmungen und deren mediale Erweiterungen – führt es zu keinem adäquaten Verständnis davon, wie Bedeutungen produziert werden. Daraus ergibt sich die Forschungsfrage, wie die künstlerische Reaktion auf die im 19. Jahrhundert aufstrebende Fotografie die Ausdrucksformen beeinflusste und ob sich die gegenseitige Abhängigkeit von Malerei und Fotografie wissenschaftlich-künstlerisch rekonstruieren lässt.

Die theoretische Referenz für diese Forschung bildeten Theorieansätze nicht der Kunstgeschichte, sondern der „Visual Culture Studies“, konkret: Martin Jay („Scopic Regimes of Modernity“), Jonathan Crary („Techniques of the Observer“) und Rosalind Krauss („Originality“).

Dazu wurde die Rezeption der aufkommenden Fotografie in der künstlerischen Produktion beispielhaft untersucht, wobei mit Eugène Delacroix, Gustave Caillebotte sowie dem künstlerischen Dialog zwischen Henri Matisse und Brassai die Problematik herausgearbeitet wurde, mit der sich die bildende Kunst im Lauf jener Jahrzehnte, in denen die Fotografie sich etabliert hat, konfrontiert sah. Sie war eine medientechnische Neuheit mit älteren Wurzeln und diente der Malerei als Hilfsmittel (Camera Obscura) und hat durch ihr technische Potenzial dennoch das Verständnis von Kunst radikal verändert: sie löste das Ideal einer bestimmten Maltechnik ab, die sich mit dem Verbergen des Pinselstriches verband, und bedeutete in diesem gewissen Sinn das „Ende der Kunst“ (nach Paul Delaroche).

Bis in die heutige Kunstproduktion zieht sich die Frage, was nach dem Ende der Perfektionierung von Reproduktion durch ihre Übernahme mittels medientechnischer Apparatur, die nun selbst zum Ausdruck strebt, überhaupt noch ein „Kunstwerk“ ist oder sein kann. Technisch gestützte Formen der Aneignung und Imitation stellen das klassische Wertemodell der meisterlich ausgeführten Repräsentation von Wirklichkeit in Frage, obwohl „Originalität“ angesichts der Flut von Reproduktionen doch immer noch - oder gerade deswegen - eine Wertschätzung erfährt.

Daher wurden dann auch im künstlerischen Teil verschiedene Modelle des Sehens getestet, um kulturelle und historische Variablen zu ermitteln, die visuelle Kultur beeinflussen und festlegen. Dabei wurde vor allem auch die Rolle der Beobachter reflektiert - die anders als bei Unterhaltungsmedien - in Kunstkontexten eben keine passiven Zuschauer sind. Was den Künstler, und was den Betrachter von Kunst definiert, lässt sich gleichwohl weder auf eine bestimmte Sinnlichkeit noch eine bestimmte Medientechnologie reduzieren.

Wie schon nach dem Aufkommen der Fotografie werden Künstler weiterhin auf der Suche nach neuen Ausdrucksformen sein, um andere Weltwahrnehmungen und neue, andere Perspektiven menschlicher Existenz zu erlangen. Mediale Technologien haben sie dabei immer schon unterstützt. Aus meiner Untersuchung schließe ich, dass neue Technologien Kunst nicht definitiv beeinflussen, wohl aber

ihren Entstehungsprozess verändern und beeinflussen können. Die Frage, wie das geschieht und welche Effekte es zeitigt, bedarf einer stets erneuerten Verhandlung.

Daraus folgt die Schlussfolgerung, dass man von Künstlern verlangen kann oder sogar muss, sich vor der Wirklichkeit der Technologie nicht zurückzuziehen, sondern sich medientechnische Kompetenzen anzueignen und sich aktiv am Diskurs um neue Technologien zu beteiligen.

Kurzdokumentation des künstlerischen Teils

Erste Ausstellung...

WHAT DO YOU SEE?

*[Ausstellung am 20. Juni 2014 in der Gone Fishing
Galerie in Leipzig zum Zwecke meiner
Dissertationsforschung]*

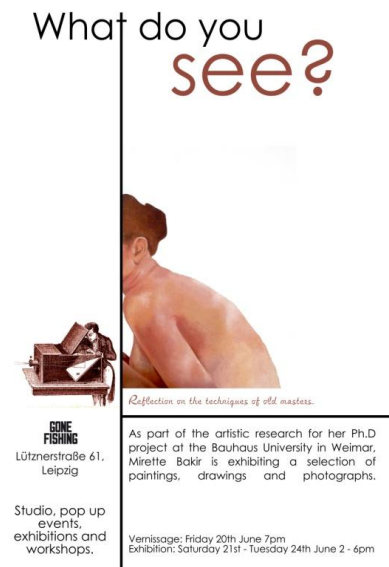
Das Erforschen der Camera Obscura hat mich in hohem Maße inspiriert und mir das Gefühl gegeben, meine Nische gefunden zu haben – in dieser kleinen Schachtel, welche die ganze Welt in sich trägt, doch nur einen Teil davon reflektiert.

Ich reiste zwischen der Realität und ihrer Spiegelung hin und her. Dabei stellte ich die verschiedenen Perspektiven, Beobachtungen und mannigfaltige Ebenen menschlichen Sehens in Frage.

Im Rahmen meiner Recherche und meiner Faszination konzentrierte ich mich auf die Camera Obscura und andere moderne optische Instrumente, wie zum Beispiel den Projektor, eine Digitalkamera und einen mit verschiedenen Grafikprogrammen ausgestatteten Computer.

Es war nicht meine Absicht, eine umfassende historische Abhandlung der Entwicklung von Technologie und ihres Einflusses auf Kunst zu schreiben, sondern vielmehr zu untersuchen, wie sie verwendet und angenommen wurde; und, darauf aufbauend, ein Konzept von visueller Kultur als Transaktion zwischen dem aktiven Betrachter und dem Betrachteten zu vertreten sowie den grundlegenden Unterschied zwischen menschlicher und mechanischer Wahrnehmung festzumachen.

Die Ausstellung bestand aus zwei Teilen. Im ersten wurden die Malereien und Zeichnungen gezeigt, die mithilfe der oben genannten Werkzeuge erstellt worden waren. Im zweiten Teil konnten die Besucher an einem Workshop teilnehmen, indem sie die ausgestellte Camera Obscura zur Erstellung von Sketchen nutzten und ihre Funktionen entdeckten.



In meiner Ausstellung "What Do You See?" durften die Besucher die Camera Obscura ausprobieren und ihre Möglichkeiten erkunden, mit dem Ziel, einfache Sketche von "Kopien" von Vermeer's Malereien zu erschaffen, die vor der Camera platziert worden waren. Ich entschied mich für Vermeer's "Music Lesson" (siehe unten), weil wegen dieses und anderen Gemälden die Vermutung aufgekommen war, dass Vermeer womöglich die Camera Obscura nutzte, wie Philip Steadman als Erster argumentierte.



Außerdem findet man darin die Art von Perspektive, die den Teilnehmern ein besseres Verständnis der Funktionsweise dieses Apparates ermöglichen würde.

Die Themen Repräsentation, Imitation, Aneignung wurden in der Ausstellung alle behandelt: die drei folgenden Gemälde wurden mithilfe eines Computers erklärt und gewissermaßen manipuliert. Doch das vierte wurde im "klassischen Sinne" direkt nach einem lebendigen Modell geschaffen.

"Ab heute ist die Malerei tot!" Das rief der Maler Paul Delaroche bei der offiziellen Einführung des Daguerreotyps am Institut de France am 19. August 1839. Ganz grundsätzlich hatte Delaroche vielleicht Recht. Wir sehen am Verlauf der Geschichte, dass nicht mehr die alten, manuellen Fertigkeiten, sondern neuere, anspruchsvolle Technologien die zentrale Rolle bei der Abbildung der Realität einnehmen.

Im Bild Nummer 1 benutzte ich erst eine Digitalkamera, um das Modell zu fotografieren, übertrug das Foto auf den Computer, bearbeitete Hintergrund und Belichtung, übertrug es dann wiederum als Projektion auf Leinwand und zog die Umrisse nach, um anschließend meine Farben einzusetzen und es zu bemalen.

Ich kann mir vorstellen, dass Delaroche das oben Beschriebene als große Täuschung bezeichnen würde, wenn er davon lesen würde.

Meiner Meinung nach haben neue Technologien den Künstlern im Laufe der Zeit aber definitiv geholfen.

Für Bild Nummer 2 benutzte ich ein Kindergarten Foto aus den Achtzigern. Ich verfälschte es einfach und übertrug es auf Leinwand.

Bild Nummer 3 wurde ähnlich wie Nummer 1 bearbeitet, doch der gesamte Hintergrund wurde so konzipiert, dass ein Schwebefeffekt entstand.

Bild Nummer 4 stellt ein lebendiges Modell (modèle vivant) dar und wurde durch kein Hilfsmittel manipuliert.

1



2



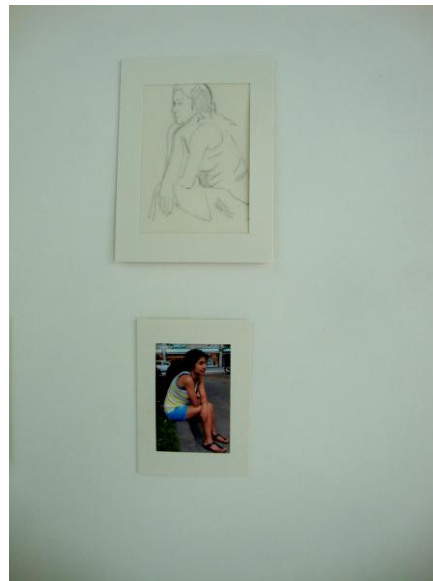
3



4



Zusätzlich zu den Bildern stellte ich einige Sketche aus, die ich mithilfe der Box Camera Obscura erstellt hatte, um die Eigenschaften der entstandenen Zeichnungen darzustellen und ihre Qualität zu untersuchen; ich stellte die Sicht der Camera (als digitales Foto der Oberfläche der Camera Obscura) zusammen mit den Sketchen aus.



Zweite Ausstellung...

MOI ET L'AUTRE

[Eine Installation in der Gone Fishing Galerie in Leipzig im August 2014 zum Zwecke meiner Dissertationsforschung]

Ich habe versucht in meiner Arbeit auf die eine oder andere Weise einen Diskurs zwischen der Malerei und dem projizierten Bild zu erschaffen, – mit der Möglichkeit die Grenzen des digitalen Bildrahmens zu übertreten – um das Bild physisch dem Beobachter entgegenspringen zu lassen oder den Beobachter virtuell in das Bild hineingehen zu lassen.

Wir stehen auf einer Plattform in einem Zimmer mit Blick zur Ecke. Direkt vor uns befindet sich ein schwarzer Würfel auf dem Boden, ein Bild wird kopfüber an die Wand projiziert, ein Ornament mit einer eingerahmten Malerei hängt an der anderen Wand.



Ich habe diese Installation auf folgenden Ebenen bearbeitet:

Das erste Level: die Camera Obscura (der schwarze Würfel)

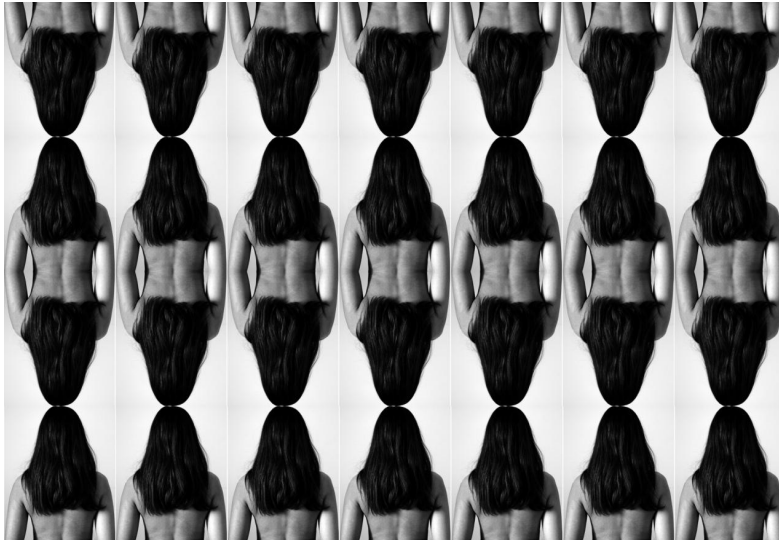
Das zweite Level: Ich in der Malerei und dem Muster

Das dritte Level: das Andere (das projizierte Bild)

Das vierte Level: der Beobachter

Die Installation besteht aus vier Elementen.

1. Das Ornament



Angeichts der Tatsache, dass ich in einer Kultur aufgewachsen bin, in der die Ornamentierung erfunden wurde und bis heute eine wichtige Rolle im Alltag spielt, beeinflusst sie mich sehr und stellt einen wesentlichen Aspekt meiner Identität dar.

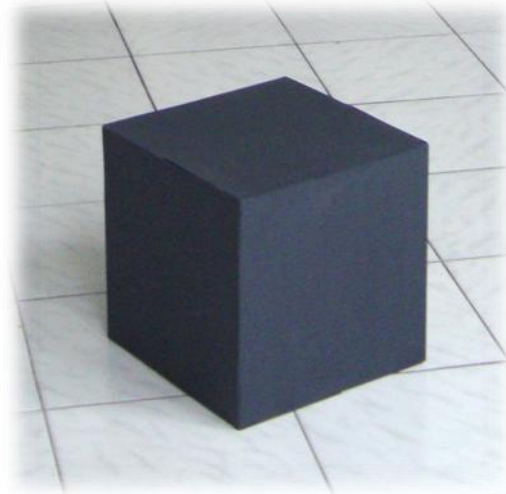
Ich habe das Ornament in meiner Installation genutzt, da ich es als visuelle Sprache betrachte, die versucht ein System von Modellen zu definieren, welches die universelle Ordnung als Schnittpunkt unterschiedlicher Disziplinen betrachtet. Es spiegelt die Genauigkeit einer sehr anspruchsvollen, systematischen und organisierten Kultur wider. Diese visuelle Sprache besteht aus abstrakten, verfeinerten und fragilen Einheiten, die alle gemeinsam ein sehr starkes Gebilde formen. Jede Einheit in diesem Gebilde ist unentbehrlich. Würden wir eine Einheit entfernen, würde das gesamte System zusammenbrechen.

Mir fallen einschlägige Ähnlichkeiten zwischen diesem System von Modellen und "Frauen" in der Kultur des Nahen und Mittleren Ostens auf. Darum habe ich mich selbst als Modell der Installation verwendet; zum Einen, um mich selbst als Frau zu verkörpern, zum Anderen, um die Idee, gleichzeitig Subjekt und Objekt zu sein, zu reflektieren; und drittens, um eine imaginäre Übertragung und technische Transformation zu verkörpern, indem "ich" (das Modell) von der externen Welt in das Kunstwerk übertragen wurde.

2. Die Malerei:



3. Der schwarze Würfel:



Ich habe den schwarzen Würfel zugleich als Anspielung auf Religion und die Camera Obscura eingesetzt.

4. Das projizierte Bild:

Das Bild wird kopfüber projiziert, um auf das Produkt der Camera Obscura hinzuweisen.

Beschreibung:

Die der Camera Obscura eigene Sichtweise (eine zentrierte, ideale, körperlose Sichtweise, die im 16. und 17. Jahrhundert vorherrschte) hatte den Zugang zu einer objektiven Wahrheit über die Welt garantiert. Doch ein solcher Zugang zur Wahrheit war von einem losgelösten Subjekt abhängig, dessen Sinneswahrnehmungen einer externen, vorgegebenen Welt objektiver Wahrheit untergeordnet sind. Jonathan Crary behauptete, dass dieses Modell im neunzehnten Jahrhundert aus einem Grund sein Ende fand: wegen der Erweiterung visueller Diskurse und Praxen um einen Faktor: den menschlichen Körper. Der Ausschluss dieses Faktors war bezeichnend für die klassischen Theorien von Vision und Optik. So wurde also ein modernes Verständnis von Vision geschaffen und damit eine neue Art von körperlich

anwesendem Beobachter anstelle des unsichtbaren, körperlosen Beobachters der Camera Obscura.



Um diese Konzepte darzulegen, erschien es mir interessant die Projektion der Camera Obscura in eine Installation einzufügen, die einen aktiven Beobachter zur Sinnfindung benötigte. Dies entspricht eher späteren Modellen des Sehens.

Als Anspielung auf die Camera Obscura projizierte ich in meiner Installation Fotos von Ereignissen, die für mich entscheidend waren, kopfüber und in hoher Auflösung.

Um das gesamte Werk zu verstehen, muss der Betrachter mit ihm interagieren, indem er sich in die Installation hinein und um sie herum bewegt. So kann er alle Elemente einzeln verstehen und schließlich miteinander kombinieren.

Ehrenwörtliche Erklärung

Ich erkläre hiermit ehrenwörtlich, dass ich die vorliegende Arbeit ohne unzulässige Hilfe Dritter und ohne Benutzung anderer als der angegebenen Hilfsmittel angefertigt habe. Die aus anderen Quellen direkt oder indirekt übernommenen Daten, Methoden und Konzepte sind unter Angabe der Quellen gekennzeichnet.

Bei der Auswahl der Auswertung folgenden Materials haben mir die nachstehend aufgeführten Personen in der jeweils beschriebenen Weise entgeltlich/unentgeltlich geholfen:

1. ...
2. ...
3. ...

Weitere Personen waren an der inhaltlich-materiellen Erstellung der vorliegenden Arbeit nicht beteiligt. Insbesondere habe ich hierfür nicht die entgeltliche Hilfe von Vermittlungs- bzw. Beratungsdiensten (Promotionsberater oder anderer Personen) in Anspruch genommen. Niemand hat von mir unmittelbar oder mittelbar geldwerte Leistungen für Arbeiten erhalten, die im Zusammenhang mit dem Inhalt der vorgelegten Ph. D.-Arbeit stehen.

Die Arbeit wurde bisher weder im In- noch im Ausland in gleicher oder ähnlicher Form einer anderen Prüfungsbehörde vorgelegt.

Ich versichere ehrenwörtlich, dass ich nach bestem Wissen die reine Wahrheit gesagt und nichts verschwiegen habe.